



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI PISA

DIPARTIMENTO DI CIVILTÀ E FORME DEL SAPERE

CORSO DI LAUREA IN ORIENTALISTICA: EGITTO, VICINO E MEDIO
ORIENTE

Tesi di Laurea

THE DEATH OF ANCIENT EGYPTIAN GODS
TERMINOLOGICAL AND SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF LITERARY
EVIDENCE

Relatore:

Prof.ssa Marilina BETRÒ

Correlatore:

Dott. Gianluca MINIACI

Candidato:

Alice BROTTTO

Anno Accademico 2015-2016

*To my grandmother Liliana,
among the imperishable stars.*

Abstract

This paper consists in the exploration of ancient Egyptian literary sources from the Old Kingdom to the Graeco-Roman Period dealing with divine death. First of all, a distinction between death by violence and natural death is necessary and, in regard to the latter, the possibility of gods growing old is discussed. Next to Osiris – the dead god *par excellence* – and the sun god, the instances of other gods are examined and they are in particular those of Apophis, Seth, Shu, Geb, Horus, the Ogdoad, the Ennead of Edfu, and the ancestor gods of Esna. Besides, additional evidence deals with unnamed gods, minor gods, gods in general and gods as a whole. According to the context, divine death might be referred to more or less indirectly by means of euphemisms and periphrases, but, in other instances, even slightly more explicitly. Grammar forms, along with some of the terms employed, prove that divine death was conceived as something real by the Ancient Egyptians. In this regard, the thematic approach and the chronological investigation of literary evidence reveals that the violent aspect of divine death, predominant in the earliest sources, lost most of its strength with time passing by. The meaning of a god's death is different from an instance to another and acquires a different connotation as a consequence of the circumstances and of the literary genre to which the concerned source belongs.

Riassunto analitico

Il presente studio prende in esame le fonti letterarie antico-egiziane che trattano della morte degli dei in un arco cronologico che si estende dall'Antico Regno fino all'epoca Greco-Romana. È necessaria innanzitutto una distinzione tra una morte violenta e una di tipo naturale e, a proposito di quest'ultima, viene discussa la possibilità che gli dei siano soggetti all'invecchiamento. Accanto ad Osiri, il dio morto per eccellenza, e al dio sole, vengono esaminati gli esempi di altre divinità e in particolare quelli costituiti da Apophis, Seth, Shu, Geb, Horus, dall'Ogdoad, dall'Enneade di Edfu, e dalle divinità antenate di Esna. Inoltre, ulteriori evidenze trattano di dei senza nome, divinità minori, esseri divini in generale, e divinità nel loro complesso. A seconda del contesto, una morte divina può essere affrontata più o meno indirettamente, attraverso l'uso di eufemismi e perifrasi, ma anche in maniera più esplicita. Le forme grammaticali, così come alcuni dei termini impiegati, dimostrano che gli antichi egiziani concepivano la morte divina come qualcosa di reale. A questo proposito, l'approccio tematico e cronologico alle fonti testuali rivela come l'aspetto violento delle morti divine, predominante nelle fonti più antiche, perda la sua importanza con il passare del tempo. Il significato della morte di un dio cambia da un caso all'altro, acquisendo una connotazione diversa in conseguenza delle circostanze e del genere letterario cui appartiene la fonte testuale in questione.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 1 DEATH IN ANCIENT EGYPT	8
1.1. The conception of death	8
1.2. The importance of integrity	9
1.2.1. The ka	11
1.2.2. The ba	13
1.2.3. The akh	15
1.2.4. The name	16
1.2.5. The body	17
1.2.6. The heart	18
1.2.7. The shadow	19
1.3. Death as a cycle	20
1.4. The euphemisms of death	21
CHAPTER 2 ALL THE GODS	23
2.1. Old age and consequent death	23
2.2. The West, the place created for the gods	28
2.3. Physical deterioration of dead gods	32
2.4. The reversion to the primeval state	34
2.5. Death in euphemistic terms	37
2.5.1. Gods going to their kas	37
2.6. Death by violence	47
2.6.1. Feasting on gods	47
2.6.2. Eating and swallowing gods	64
2.6.3. Living on gods	69
2.6.3. Seth's intimidations	70
2.6.5. Death by fire	72
2.6.6. Death by cataclysm	74
2.7. Every god dies	76
2.8. Gods living after death	77
2.8.1. Neper	77
2.8.2. Sk-wr	80

2.9. Summary and cross references	81
CHAPTER 3 OSIRIS.....	83
3.1. The myth of the dead of Osiris	86
3.1.1. Plutarch's version of the myth	86
3.1.2. The Egyptian version of the myth.....	88
3.2. The death of Osiris in euphemistic terms	92
3.2.1. Osiris's death described by the image of him lying on his side	93
3.2.2. Osiris as a sleeping god	98
3.2.3. Osiris as a weary god	100
3.2.3. Osiris's death as a departure	103
3.2.3. Osiris's death as a suffering.....	107
3.2.4. The use of epithets	108
3.3. The death of Osiris in explicit terms.....	108
3.3.1. Osiris's death described by means of verbs denoting violence	108
3.3.2. Osiris's death referred to by means of the verb meaning "to kill"	115
3.3.3. Osiris referred to as dead	117
3.4. Metaphorical descriptions of Osiris's death	121
3.5. Summary and cross references	123
CHAPTER 4 THE SUN GOD.....	126
4.1. The sun god setting	127
4.1.1. The use of the verb ḥtp	128
4.1.2. The use of verbs other than ḥtp.....	136
4.1.3. The use of uncommon expression to refer to the sun setting.....	140
4.2. The sun god said to be going to his ba.....	144
4.3. The sun god swallowed by Nut.....	145
4.4. Ra said to be dead	150
4.5. Old age and consequent departure	153
4.6. The assassination attempt of Ra.....	159
4.7. Summary and cross references	162
CHAPTER 5 APOPHIS.....	164
5.1. The defeat and condemnation to death of Apophis in literature.....	165
5.1.1. Apophis's repulsion in allusive terms.....	167
5.1.2. Apophis's repulsion as an enemy already defeated	170

5.1.3. Apophis's repulsion described as a violent torture	175
5.1.4. Apophis's defeat as total annihilation	181
5.1.5. Apophis's defeat as a ritual overthrowing.....	186
5.1.6. Apophis's defeat defined as a murder.....	190
5.1.7. Dead (mwt) in the form of the turtle	192
5.2. Figurative and symbolical representations of the killing of Apophis	193
5.3. The meaning of Apophis's death	196
5.4. Killed but not defeated	197
5.6. Summary and cross references	201
CHAPTER 6 SETH.....	203
6.1. The god who claimed to be immortal.....	204
6.2. Euphemistic and explicit terms to describe Seth's death	206
6.3. Execration rituals against Seth	208
6.4. The symbolical killing of Seth	214
6.5. Summary and cross references	218
CHAPTER 7 SHU AND GEB	220
7.1. The death by violence of Shu	221
7.2. The death by condemnation of Geb	224
7.3. The death and resurrection of Geb	226
7.4. Summary and cross references	230
CHAPTER 8 THE ANCESTOR GODS	231
8.1. The Ogdoad and Kematef at Thebes	231
8.1.1. The meaning of the Ogdoad's name and epithets in connection with their death	234
8.1.2. Evidence of the mortuary cult of the Ogdoad	236
8.1.3. The Ogdoad as gods at rest	240
8.1.4. The Ogdoad as dead gods.....	243
8.1.5. The dynamics of the Ogdoad's death	244
8.1.6. The return to the Nun	245
8.2. The Ennead of Edfu.....	246
8.2.1. The death of the Ennead as ascension to the sky	249
8.2.2. The Ennead as gods at rest	251
8.3. The primeval gods of Esna.....	252
8.4. Summary cross references.....	254

CHAPTER 9 HORUS.....	255
9.1. Horus the Child described as if dead	255
9.2. The wrongly-presumed death of Horus	261
9.3. Summary and cross references	263
CONCLUSIONS	264
LIST OF FIGURES	269
LIST OF SYMBOLS	271
BIBLIOGRAPHY	273
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	305

INTRODUCTION

In his description of Egypt, Thomas Mann wrote that it is the place where “your dead are gods and your gods are dead”. The first statement has always been acknowledged, whereas the second is more problematic. The present paper is a collection and analysis of evidence dealing with the topic of divine death. Despite the fascination of the subject, an exhaustive study on the matter in all of its aspects and facets was still lacking. Going through sources from the appearance of ancient Egyptian literature up to the end of dynastic Egypt, texts dealing with this issue have been collected in order to be investigated. The fact that ancient Egyptians never openly spoke of a god’s death does not mean that they did not conceive it as real. The aim of this paper is indeed to demonstrate this, focusing in particular on the terms employed and the expressions used. Another interesting question to answer is whether in ancient Egypt death was in the first instance a divine or a human prerogative. Do gods die because men are destined to or, on the contrary, do human beings die because no one can escape death, neither gods? In other words, was mortality a characteristic transferred from the gods to human beings or was it assigned to deities by people? For instance, Sethe and others claimed that Osiris was an ancient king subsequently deified after his death¹, in this sense transferring death from the human sphere to the divine. Yet, this interpretation is to be rejected categorically. On the contrary, as it will be demonstrated throughout this study, death belonged to gods in the first place.

In the beginning, scholars thought that by their nature gods *had to be* immortal. The death of gods was completely rejected and it was even denied that it ever occurred in legends other than the Osirian Myth². Nonetheless, another conception of divine beings was formulated in parallel with the first. Wiedemann accepted the idea that the life of gods had an end, even though their lifespan was longer than human beings’, and recognized that their power was limited as well. Formulating this theory, however, he pushed too far and took an extreme position by affirming that there was not “any essential distinction between gods and men”³. However, he credited for recognizing that gods were not immortal and that mortality was not restricted to the sole Osiris. Indeed, as it will be demonstrated in the present paper, divine mortality is a phenomenon

¹ Cf. Gardiner, 1960, p. 104.

² For instance, von Strauss und Torney, 1889, p. 51.

³ Wiedemann, 1897, p. 173 = 1890, p. 91.

actually concerning many more gods than Egyptologists would expect, if not even *all of them*.

Throughout the years, some aspects of divine death have been investigated by numerous scholars. The first study to be mentioned is certainly the massive anthropological and comparative work by James Frazer. The third volume of the third edition⁴ of his study is dedicated to the dying gods – and also kings – as conceived by various cultures, whereas volume six⁵ is almost entirely devoted to Osiris, whom he defines the Egyptian counterpart of the Phoenician Adonis and the Phrygian Attis, both of which are connected with vegetation and, consequently, with rebirth. As for Osiris, Frazer essentially considered him as a personification of crops in his dying and coming to life every year and thus strictly associated him with fertility. The three gods would therefore be expressions of the same magical and ritual model which, after a crisis resulting in death and descent into the Netherworld, would periodically bring these divine beings back to life. The author, however, as others before him, considered the possibility of Osiris being a subsequently divinized king and his entire theory has by now been rejected. In contrast to Frazer's theory, Jensen elaborated an alternative explanation on the "dying god". He suggested that such conception was founded on the myth of a female or male character who had been dismembered, buried and from whose remains crops had grown⁶. Osiris, according to the conceptions widespread at the time, was obviously ascribed to this category.

In the wake of Frazer, scholars of ancient religion embraced the concept of the "dying god" and considered it as a reflection of people's attitude toward death: the resurrection of the god corresponds to human beings' prefiguration of their destiny⁷. Osiris is the representative of these conceptions and consequently the most studied of the ancient Egyptian gods in the context of "dying and rising gods" of the ancient Near East⁸. In such regard, it is interesting to note how many cultures used to have dying and dead gods – and sometimes even rising ones – in their pantheon. Next to the main dying gods identified by Frazer – Adonis, Attis, Osiris, Persephone and Dionysus⁹ – others have been added to this list: Marduk from Babylonia, the Sumerian Dumuzi (counterpart of the later Sumerian Tammuz), the Hittite Telipinu, the Phoenician Melqart and Eshmur,

⁴ Frazer, 1911.

⁵ Frazer, 1914.

⁶ Jensen, 1951.

⁷ Frankfort, 1949, p. 143.

⁸ An exemplificative study is Mettinger, 2001.

⁹ The myth narrates that Dionysus was dismembered by the Titans.

and last but not least Baal, venerated in Ugarit during the II Millennium BC¹⁰. As far as the myth of Baal is concerned, it narrates that, after defeating Yam – thus granting cosmic order – and becoming king, Mot, personification of death, broke into Baal's palace. Baal surrendered, became Mot's slave and descended in the Underworld. The above described events are set when drought was starting to hit. Baal's wife and sister Anath looked for her brother's corpse, found it and buried it on Mount Saphon. She also killed Mot, burned him up and scattered his ashes on the earth but, despite this, he was resurrected shortly after. However, also Baal came back to life and fought against Mot. There was no winner but Mot had his domain limited on the earth as a consequence of having been killed by Anath. Death had been scattered throughout the earthly world, affecting from then on human beings only and no longer the sky, namely the gods. However, what is to stress here is that the text openly states that Baal came back to life, by means of the verb *yhw* ("to live"), after admitting that he had died when his decease is lamented by the supreme god El¹¹. The text explicitly uses the verb "to die" (*mt*) and also states more than once that Baal has perished¹². In the present study on the death of ancient Egyptian gods, textual sources have been surveyed for similar statements.

The death of Osiris has been analyzed also outside the field of comparative religion and anthropology, focusing more on his cult and myth. As for the latter, the work by Griffiths must necessarily be mentioned¹³. However, a study on how ancient Egyptians perceived his murder and dealt with it in the literary sources has not yet been presented. Funerary literature is in fact almost saturated with mentions of the myth, some of them more obscure, other a little more unambiguous. Anyway, they are sometimes much more explicit than Egyptologists are inclined to admit¹⁴. A study similar to the one presented here does actually exist only in reference to the *Pyramid Texts*¹⁵. As part of this paper, it has been tried to explore this topic in chapter 3, which is the one entirely dedicated to Osiris. Leaving out the issue whether Osiris was drowned

¹⁰ A general and concise outline on the matter is offered in Xella, 2001. After a brief introduction on the matter of the "dying god", essays by different authors focus on some of the deities quoted in this list.

¹¹ The concerned passage is KTU 1.5 VI 23-25.

¹² Cf. Smith, 1994, p. 46.

¹³ Griffiths, 1980.

¹⁴ Hornung, among them, even writes: "Texts speak of the tomb and the resurrection of Osiris, and both are even depicted pictorially; there are allusions to what his enemies 'did' to him, his 'deathly tiredness', and the laments of his sisters, Isis and Nephthys, are mentioned—but Egyptian texts of the pharaonic period never say that Osiris died" (1982, p. 152).

¹⁵ Guilhou, 1998.

or massacred¹⁶ – either as two consecutive events, as Plutarch narrated, or as two alternative and clashing versions of a sole death – the paper focuses on the violent aspect of the god’s murder, especially in regard to terminology and images employed. They have been differentiated in two main categories, namely a euphemistic one and another one characterized by the use of verbs denoting violence. Next to these, uncommon metaphors and expressions along with evidence extraordinarily referring to Osiris as a dead have also been collected.

Despite the fact that in 1890 Wiedemann acknowledged that death was not confined to Osiris, studies on other deities are almost completely lacking, as well as a compressive study on this issue. In one of his works, Hornung dedicated a few pages to the dying but also aging god¹⁷. This last aspect is also important for the matter. Hornung recognized it, whereas, for instance Griffith rejected it completely¹⁸. Part of the second chapter is also dedicated to this issue, analyzing the sources suggesting the possibility that gods may grow old. However, to go back to the dying god, the one scholars have focused on has always been Osiris.

Next to him, also another god above others offered the promise of rebirth and even proved it to be right: the sun god Ra. Every evening, ancient Egyptians witnessed his passing, yet every morning they saw him come back to life, regenerated. Contrary to Osiris, who is resurrected but still confined in the Duat as a ruler, Ra emerges from the reign of the dead after traversing it during the night. Next to this, different conceptions arose, one conceiving him as a god suffering from old age before the daily cycle of the sun was ever established, the other declaring that he has ended his life, departed earth and left his earthly reign to his descendants. The sun god is the core of chapter 4.

Egyptian sources actually offer plenty of references to gods other than him which are said to have been feasted on, killed violently or which are simply said of that

¹⁶ This issue has been long discussed by scholars, resulting in a plurality of points of view. The drowning of Osiris has firstly been promoted by Griffiths who suggested that those who drowned in the Nile were considered to be sacred, having suffered the same fate as Osiris’s (Griffiths, 1909). The god’s presumed death by drowning has even been considered accidental, misinterpreting a passage from the Shabaka Stone (Farina, 1923). In clear opposition to them stands Vernus who translates the verb *mhi* (properly “to drown”) “to drive” or “to drift” (Vernus, 1991), categorically refusing that Osiris possibly died by drowning at the hands of Seth, something which he defines “le mythe d’un mythe”. All the uncertainties in regard to the Osirian myth that we find in ancient Egyptian literature are due in the first place to the fact that religious texts tended to collect various episodes and not to edit them. Consequently, the ancient Egyptians never tried to reconcile the numerous contradictions which arose as time passed by. Besides, the fact that the moment of the murder of Osiris was never written down has certainly concurred in all of this.

¹⁷ 1981, p. 151-162.

¹⁸ 1980, p. 23.

they will die sooner or later since the creator god has decreed this destiny for them. Some of these divine beings are not given a name, but are simply identified as primeval gods, as in their ritual consumption narrated in PT 273-274. To miscellaneous, minor, undefined divine beings, groups of deities, deities who could not be included in a dedicated chapter – either because of the relative scarcity of sources about them or because of their minor importance in comparison to the main deities – and especially to gods as a totality has been dedicated chapter 2. This chapter provides examples in general terms and is also meant as an introduction to the concept of divine death as well as to its different meanings and implications. Since such allusions are many and scattered throughout various texts of different kinds, it has been assumed that the best way to go through this chapter would be by organizing evidence thematically. Inside each thematic category of divine death, sources are quoted chronologically in order to highlight potential evolution or, on the contrary, the development of a proper tradition. At first, the choice of starting chapter 2 with sources almost dating back to a later time (from the New Kingdom to the Ptolemaic Period) could seem quite contradictory. Nonetheless, it seemed more appropriate to clarify some fundamental concepts as soon as possible, namely the possibility for gods to grow old and consequently die of natural death. This kind of decease is in clear opposition with a violent one, which was once believed to be the only possibility of death for gods because of their presumed “immortal” nature. Part of chapter 2 is also dedicated to violent death as well as to passing described by means of euphemistic expressions. Similarly to the case of aging, the possibility for the necropolis to have been created for dead gods in the first place deserved particular attention and demanded to be explored at the very beginning.

Just like this part, all chapters are organized thematically. Such decision has been based on the possibility of organizing the content as suggested by narrative matter, terminology employed, standard or uncommon expressions.

Next to Osiris, other gods belonging to the Heliopolitan Ennead, the group of the main gods of ancient Egypt, were believed to have experienced death. They are gods whose death occurs ideally before Osiris’s, even though elaborated in a later time, namely Shu and Geb. Their case is analyzed in chapter 7. It is basically an example of death by violence, but a surprise expects us as well.

As a model of death by violence, it is still completely different from the tortures which ideally resulted in total annihilation – what ancient Egyptians called “second death” – inflicted to the enemies of the sun god and Osiris, namely Apophis and Seth,

respectively. The paper focuses on the former in chapter 5, whereas the latter is the core of chapter 6. Their instances are also interesting because, contrarily to all other gods, their slaughtering is symbolically represented in the figurative record as well as in dramas in the case of Seth.

Also, it is interesting to note that the ancient Egyptians were convinced of the existence of tombs belonging to the gods. The reference is not only to the presumed tomb of Osiris at Abydos, in truth nothing but the burial place of the I Dynasty ruler Djer, nor to the second structure of the so-called Osireion, built by Seti I in the XIX Dynasty to symbolically represent the tomb of Osiris on the model of tombs of the Valley of the Kings. The burial places of this deity, however, were believed to be many more. Numerous literary sources even mention entire cemeteries of gods. In ancient Egyptian language the main term to designate the necropolis is *hr.t-ntr*, literally meaning “the property of the god¹⁹”. Gods were believed to possess tombs, but this conception is absent previous to the *Coffin Texts*, in which spells mention the tombs of various deities, such as Horus, Seth and Shu. In the *Amduat* and *Book of Caverns*, the corpses of Atum and Khepri, in addition to Ra’s and Osiris’s, are buried in mounds of sand. Corpses of gods also figure in the *Book of the Earth*, enlarging the list of the gods concerned (Geb, Ta-tenen, Shu, Tefnut, Khepri, Nun, Isis, Nephthys). The mention of the Ennead resting in the necropolis occurs in many mythological papyri, yet, this insinuation is not to be taken literally. We can see it either as a reference to the blessed death²⁰ or as deities attending Osiris²¹. Among those are numerous XXI Dynasty mythological papyri collected by Piankoff²². As for the Late Time, evidence is more numerous. For instance, two documents from the Papyrus Jumilhac, dated at the end of Ptolemaic Period, mention entire necropoles of deities: one comprising the tombs of gods and followers of Horus, from Shu and Osiris to Harsiese²³, who were buried there by Anubis²⁴; the other also mentioning the place in which Anubis interred the gods following Shu, Osiris and Horus²⁵, the mythical predecessors of the earthly king. On the

¹⁹ In the beginning the word “god” was probably in connection with the king, but, with time passing by, changed its meaning, referring to the deceased in general who were indeed believed to become like gods after death. Alternatively, it could have also been associated with other gods in their role of lords of the necropolis.

²⁰ Darnell, 2004, p. 440, note 2.

²¹ Spalinger, 2004, p. 78, note 417.

²² Piankoff, Rambova, 1957. The label “mythological papyri” denotes a group of funeral papyri dating back almost entirely to the time of the XXI Dynasty and coming from Thebes.

²³ As his name suggests, indeed meaning “Horus son of Isis”, Harsiese is the posthumous son of Osiris.

²⁴ pJumilhac IX; Vandier, 1962, p. 139.

²⁵ pJumilhac XV, 1-7; Vandier, 1962, p. 126.

contrary, in other instance the mention of a necropolis of gods is an allusion to the deceased kings. Indeed, from the XI Dynasty, the necropolis is called “the place where the gods are”²⁶. Even later in time, Diodorus mentions the tomb of Isis, along with Osiris’s²⁷.

However, sources mentioning tomb of gods are many more than the ones which has been quoted above. This topic would deserve a study on its own, as well as the phenomenon of the mummiform gods, ever-present in the New Kingdom *Books of the Underworld*. The reason why this aspect has been mentioned is only to relate to the cult of dead ancestor gods developed in Ptolemaic temples. As a matter of fact, such beings were believed to dwell in a specific burial place in the neighborhood of the temple. They were visited in their resting place and offered a funerary cult to ensure their afterlife. The paper focuses on the Ogdoad and Kematef in Thebes, on the Ennead of Edfu, and on the ancestors deities of Esna in chapter 8, analyzing by means of which terms texts referred to their death.

To the evidence of the dead gods listed above, this paper adds a brief chapter, 9, dedicated to Horus the Child. Even though in the concerned myth the god is not actually deceased, the text still deals with his collapse with a vocabulary and phenomenology borrowed from the proper description of death.

To summarize, every chapter in this study will be dedicated to a god – with the exception of chapter 2 which is to be considered consider a sort on introduction on the matter and which gathers together various evidence – and is structured thematically, analyzing the various aspects of the god’s death one at a time. Each topic will deal chronologically with the concerned textual sources in order to allow to the evolution of the ancient Egyptians’ conception to emerge. All of this will be preceded by a concise and, due to the complexity of the matter and to the limited amount of pages which could be dedicate to it, extremely succinct presentation of how death was conceived in ancient Egypt (chapter 1). Even though necessarily laconic, such an introduction will be fundamental to a proper comprehension of the analyzed issues, along with some of the terms.

²⁶ A royal inscription from Deir el-Ballas reads: [x+5] *it.w-i m hr.t-ntr bw nt(y) ntr.w*, “The ancestors are in the necropolis, the place in which the gods are” (Cf. Fisher, 1964, p. 113).

²⁷ Diodorus, I, 22,1-3; Oldfather, 1933, p. 69-71.

CHAPTER 1

DEATH IN ANCIENT EGYPT

1.1. The conception of death

Life and death are as complementary as nothing else: one cannot be possible without the other, and the ancient Egyptians knew it well. Almost their entire life was spent in preparation for the moment of passing away and revolved around that concept, not only by building impressive tombs for their kings, but also creating a complex world founded on the relationship between life and death, comprising magic, literature, and social life. It has been argued that the ancient Egyptians were practically obsessed with death but the truth is that they were equally attached to life. Nevertheless, the funerary aspect is certainly the most marked and known of this ancient and fascinating culture.

However, one thing the ancient Egyptians were even more conscious about was that death was not confined to earthly beings only, but it was a divine prerogative too: not only men, but also gods could die. The archetype of the deceased was indeed a god himself. It was Osiris, definitely one of the most important gods of the entire Egyptian pantheon. He was the god who lived, died and lived an afterlife. So, in a certain way, as he traversed death, his life came a full circle, allowing him to live again in that optic of cyclical life and renewal that applied to everything in Ancient Egypt, from the daily raising and setting of the Sun, to the Nile's flooding and the life-cycle of vegetation. Dying was therefore an opportunity, not a limit. And since that was the destiny of a god, it had to be also that of human beings. This is the reason why in the funerary texts the deceased was equated with Osiris and addressed with the god's name preceding his own, a practice firstly reserved to the kings of the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties but gradually extended to all commoners from the First Intermediate Period on. As a consequence, death became the medium toward a new life, whose vision was not just black or white but had instead lots of different shades, changing through time, space and society.

1.2. The importance of integrity

Osiris, conceptually speaking, is the archetype of the dead and the starting point of such traditions, since his body was the first ever have been embalmed and the chest in which he was locked up by Seth was the prototype of coffins. As far as the myth goes, Osiris was killed by his jealous brother Seth and his body was cut into pieces, thrown into the Nile, and then reassembled by Anubis, after which its pieces were recollected by his sister and wife Isis¹. Through this complex process performed by the god Anubis, Osiris's body was once again complete – with the sole exception of his phallus, recreated by Isis – allowing him to be resuscitated by his sister and giving him the appearance of a mummiform god. This is how, ideally, the embalming process was invented.

The basic meaning of all of this is that the physical body was considered fundamental and necessary for the deceased's existence, being it the material base for two entities, the *ka* and the *ba*, two aspects which, together with name, shadow, physical body, and heart made up men². After death, the ancient Egyptians aimed at keeping all of these elements together. Funerary literature, ritual texts and figurative representations show it. A beautiful and unambiguous example is a relief (British Museum EA 55336) from the Ramesside Tomb of Amenemhat (TT 163), depicting the four sons of Horus offering these elements to the deceased kneeled in adoration: Imseti carries the heart (*ib*), Hapi the *ba*, Duamutef the *ka*, and Qebksenuf the body (*ḥ3.t*) in the form of a mummy (*s'ḥ*)³. The same scene also occurs in two additional Theban tombs (TT 157 and TT 373⁴) also from the Ramesside Period, in the tomb of Petosiris⁵ (XXX Dynasty), and on Late and Ptolemaic Periods coffins⁶.

¹ See, p 86-88.

² Taylor, 2001, p. 16.

³ Assmann, 1979, p. 68-77.

⁴ See Seyfried, 1990, p. 55-57.

⁵ See Lefebvre, 1923a, p. 61 and 1923b, pl. 29.

⁶ Kákosy, 1969, p. 65-68.



Figure 1. Sandston relief (British Museum EA 55336) from the Tomb of Amenemhat (TT 163) depicting the four sons of Horus offering the deceased his heart, ba, ka, and body. Source: Assmann, 1979, pl. X, fig. 2.

Next to those mentioned above, other sources list many additional elements. A “formula for bringing the ba to the body” (BD 191⁷) inscribed on anthropoid stone sarcophagi of the Late Period mentions eight elements. They are: ba, ka, *d.t*-body, *h3.t*-corpse, *ib*-heart, *h3.ti*-heart, shadow (*šw.t*), and mummy (*s’h*). The inscription was commonly located on the upper surface of the sarcophagus, in correspondence with the chest of the mummy, exactly where the ba was supposed to land on when visiting the body and uniting with it. This incantation is also found on numerous funerary monuments such as stelae and on Ptolemaic Period papyri. In this regard, despite the fact that it is found copied at the end of a *Book of the Dead* papyrus, the incantation actually belongs to a separate corpus of the Ptolemaic Period, namely the *Glorifications of Osiris*, part of a ritual celebrating the god’s rebirth during the annual temple festival⁸. The list of constituents enlarges even more in an unparalleled scene from the tomb of the overseer of grain Amenemhet at Thebes (TT 82), dating back to the XVIII Dynasty. Here, a total of fourteen elements is offered to the deceased, two of which lost in a lacuna. On the south wall of the chapel we find the personifications of destiny (*š3.w*), lifetime (*‘h.w*), birthplace (*mshn.t*), development (*rnn.t*), and the personal creator god (*hnm.w*), the latter mentioned next to stela (*‘h*) and tomb⁹. On the north wall the remaining elements appear, comprising offering stone (*‘b3*), *3h*, corpse (*h3.t*), shadow

⁷ Numbered thus by Allen (1952, p. 180-183).

⁸ Quirke, 2013, p. 558.

⁹ Davis, Gardiner, 1915, pl. XIX.

(šw.t), and all the deceased's manifestation (*hpr.w-f nb.w*)¹⁰. The lacuna between the offering stone and the transfigured spirit might have contained ba and heart.

The union and endurance of these elements was the essential prerequisite to grant the deceased his afterlife in the reign of the dead. If this condition were not respected, he would have suffered the frightening “second death” which could only result in the complete cessation of the deceased's existence, namely a permanent death. On the contrary, if the existence of the individual were granted, his decease (“first death”) would have been only transitory, just a brief parenthesis preceding a new state of existence, namely the eternal afterlife.

Since the elements making up beings are key concepts for this study, the main entities deserve a brief explanation.

1.2.1. *The ka*

The ka was believed to come in existence at the very moment of a person's birth, as scenes representing the mythological birth of kings demonstrate. As a matter of fact, they depict the potter god Khnum fashioning at the same time the figurines of the child-king and that of the ka on his potter wheel¹¹. This non-physical entity was considered to be a sort of a person's double and was therefore sometimes represented as the identical copy of a human being. However, the ka did not belong to the physical sphere of the deceased – as the ba does instead – but to the social one, uniting with the “self” of a person and not with his physical body¹².

The term *k3* cannot be properly translated, since the English term “double”, by which it is sometimes transposed, would be extremely reductive¹³. The word is written by means of two upraised human arms – which we have to imagine stretching out horizontally and not vertically – and possibly represents the embrace between a father and his offspring. This, together with the fact that its hieroglyphic sign is used to spell words connected with sexuality and fertility¹⁴, and that the sign is phonetically identical

¹⁰ Davis, Gardiner, 1915, pl. XXIII.

¹¹ A beautiful example is the relief (lower register, scene six) engraved on the birth colonnade (northern wall of the second terrace) of the funerary temple of Queen Hatshepsut in Deir el-Bahari. Cf. Naville, 1896, p. 14-15, pl. XLVIII.

¹² Assmann, 2006, p. 97.

¹³ On the problem of studying the *k3* in Egyptology see Bolshakov, 1997, p. 123-132.

¹⁴ For instance, *k3.t* (“vagina”), *bk3* (“to be pregnant”, “to make pregnant”), *bk3.t* (“pregnant woman”), (*t3*) *bk3* (“cow with calf”), *bk3.ty* (“testicles”). Other words simply have the consonant *k* but belong to the same root: *nki* (“copulate”), *nkiki* (“to fecundate”). Cf. Bolshakov, 1997, p. 160 and 164-165.

to the word “bull”, shows that the ka was particularly important for the interaction and connection of one generation with the next one. The ka connected indeed the son with his predecessor and consequently the community of the living with that of the dead¹⁵. In the *Pyramid Texts* (PT 356) we even read that the deceased father is the ka of his living son.

However, after the individual’s death, the ka could leave the body and move from the burial chamber, where the mummy lay, to the tomb chapel¹⁶. There, it would find a statue to reside in for the length of the offering ritual since the ka possessed no physical substance. In this way the ka received nourishment, while the individual was kept alive. The connection between the ka and nourishment is once again enlightened by the ancient Egyptian language. The phoneme ka actually makes up various words relating to food and agriculture¹⁷. In this sense, by means of absorbing the life-giving power of the food offered to the ka of the deceased, this non-physical entity was able to keep alive the individual. Nevertheless, the ka was also fundamental for the transfiguration of the deceased and to allow him to enter the afterlife by reuniting with him. Consequently, the tomb was named “house of the ka” (*ḥw.t-kȝ*) and dying was often referred to as “going to/with one’s ka”. This typical euphemism was used as soon as the Old Kingdom, earlier than the *Pyramid Texts*, occurring for the first time in private tombs of the IV Dynasty up to the New Kingdom¹⁸ to refer to the deceased passing away in very allusive terms. A text from the tomb of Khaemhet (TT 57), dating back to the XVIII Dynasty, makes it clear, wishing for the deceased to die “as one who goes to his ka”. Nevertheless, in texts employing this formula, the ka appears as a person’s double and joining him represents the image of the ideal death. A blessing formula dedicated to the officials who respect the edicts of the king from the temple of Seti I in Kanais perfectly explains this concept, reading that “his end will be peaceful in going to his ka¹⁹”. This euphemistic expression, as we will see, was used not only for human beings but also in regard to gods²⁰.

¹⁵ Assmann, 2006, p. 68.

¹⁶ In the Old Kingdom the statue at the disposal of the ka was located in an enclosed and inaccessible room called by Egyptologists *serdab*, an Arabic word meaning “cellar”.

¹⁷ For instance, *skȝ* (“to plough”), *skȝ* (“crops”), *skȝ.t* (“ploughland”), *kȝ*, *kȝw*, *kȝy* (“food”, “provisions”). Additional examples can be found in Bolshakov, 1997, p. 161-162.

¹⁸ For the occurrences dating back to the Ancient Kingdom: Sethe, 1932, p. 34, 6; p. 50, 15; p. 71, 4 and 6; p. 73, 2 and 3; Breasted, 1906, p. 87, §187; p. 115, §253. Also appearing in CT 297 (IV, 50 l). For the list of occurrences of the New Kingdom, see Lefebvre, 1924, p. 111.

¹⁹ Cf. Kitchen, 1975, p. 69, line 9.

²⁰ See p. 37-47.

All of this evidence shows that, being created simultaneously, the ka and the individual formed a union which broke down with death and which had consequently to be ritually restored in another form, as well as uniting with all the other elements composing a human being²¹.

To assure the existence of the deceased, after the individual's death the ka needed to dwell in a physical form, namely the embalmed body, eventually substituted by other supports. Likewise did the ba.

1.2.2. *The ba*

Like *k3*, also the term *b3* cannot be properly translated. As a matter of fact, the improper translation of ba with “soul”, the Greek *psyché*, would only result in the opposition between “body” (material element) and “soul” (immaterial element), a dichotomy never conceived by the ancient Egyptians. In addition, complicating what stated above, the use of this word changed over time and according to the context, depending on whether it was applied in reference to gods, kings, or private individuals²². Moreover, ancient Egyptian texts also mention groups of bas in connection with cities important for religious and political reasons – for instance, Hierakonpolis, Buto, and Heliopolis²³ – and also to inanimate objects – for example, the sun, the moon, the sphinx at Giza, sacred writings, but also the threshing floor and doors²⁴. As for the ba of gods and of the king, according to texts of the Old Kingdom, it represents the manifestation of power²⁵. On the contrary, in the *Coffin Texts*, after the development of the concept of ba, this entity appears as an alter ego of the deceased, performing physical functions – such as drinking, eating and copulating – in his behalf and thus embodying the personification of his both physical and psychical vital forces²⁶.

²¹ Assmann, 2005, p. 100-102. Assmann, 2006, p. 65.

²² This aspect has been firstly highlighted by Kees, 1977.

²³ Divinized dead kings of a certain city were considered to be its bas. On this see Zabkar, 1968, p. 15-36.

²⁴ The ancient Egyptians considered inanimate objects to be animate and consequently to possess a ba. Alternatively, an inanimate object was considered to be the ba of a god. On this see Zabkar, 1968, p. 48-50.

²⁵ As for the gods, it means that the deity is manifesting in other beings (the god as a ba). In the funerary literature the deceased often presents himself as the ba of a certain god. Gods are also said to possess bas, i.e. manifestations of their power. Similarly, the ba possessed by the king is the manifestation of his power. On the contrary, the king as a ba is the deceased king himself whose power is manifest in the afterlife (Zabkar, 1968, p. 160).

²⁶ Zabkar, 1975, col. 589.

One of the most discussed issues concerns the origin of the ba. Scholars still disagree on the matter and this quarrel resulted in two opposed points of view. The first one considers the ba one of the deceased's modes of existence which comes into being only after the individual's death²⁷; whereas the second one argues that the ba exists already during the individual's lifetime²⁸.

As for the ba, its most important feature was the capacity of movement, allowing the dead to leave his tomb, and the ba was therefore depicted as a human-headed bird from the New Kingdom on. Being able to move, allowed it to wander around the living, to join the sun bark in the sky or go to the Netherworld. Yet, the ba came back to the mummified corpse every night in order to reunite with the body and rejuvenate it, similarly to what occurred every night in the Underworld when Ra and the mummified Osiris, the latter representing the sun god's corpse, were reunited²⁹. Obviously, to allow this the physical body of the deceased had to be preserved, an idea, that of interdependence between ba and body, that originated during the Middle Kingdom³⁰. If those fundamental requirements were met, the individual was granted to live his afterlife and in CT 45 we read: "your ba shall indeed exist so that your heart shall be with you"³¹. Likewise, in CT 333 the deceased let us know that his ba will not be kept away from his body.

On the other hand, the ba also needed to be granted the possibility to move – namely leave the corpse, perform its tasks and then reunite with it – otherwise the survival of the deceased would be compromised. Thus, incantations uttered against Seth as a punishment for the great crime he has committed against his brother reads, among other castigations: "your ba will not come out anymore and your body will not move anymore"³².

The ba was so strictly connected with both life and death that the act of passing away was often euphemistically referred to as "going to or with one's ba". Examples of this terminology are not attested to describe gods' death in *Pyramid Texts*³³. It occurs

²⁷ Zabkar, 1968, p. 92-97.

²⁸ Allen, 2001, p. 161-162.

²⁹ Taylor 2001, p. 21-23.

³⁰ Cf. Zabkar, 1968, p. 106.

³¹ *wnn wnn.t bj-k wn ib-k hn '-k*; De Buck, 1935, p. 197, g.

³² Papyrus New York 35.9.21 cols. 29,10 and 32,5; Goyon, 1975a, p. 382-383 and p. 394-395.

³³ See p. 45.

instead in the New Kingdom *Amduat* in reference to the night journey of Ra in the Netherworld³⁴.

1.2.3. *The akh*

The same terminology “to go to/with one’s ka/ba”, explained above, also applies to the concept of *ꜥḥ* (PT 305). The latter is the name given to a transfigured individual who, through the complete experience of death, reached eternal existence. The term is represented by the sign of the crested ibis³⁵ and properly means “effectiveness”. Nevertheless, scholars have also connected its root to the verb *ꜥḥ* (“to shine”)³⁶, adding to this concept the idea of light. In this regard, *akh* often indicates forms of effective light such as the circumpolar stars, Ra’s eye, and sun rays.

Thus, in the mortuary context, a transfigured deceased is an effective one, capable of movement and full physical functioning³⁷. The *akh* was not considered as one of the entities making up the individual – unlike body, ba, ka, name and shadow – but it was a status the deceased had to turn into. To reach this state, the funerary ritual had to be properly accomplished, granting mummification, burial, offerings and providing the deceased with the necessary knowledge of magical spells to overcome a series of obstacles and tests that he would encounter once in the Underworld.

One of the characteristic of the *akh* and of its effectiveness is that it crossed the threshold between the divine and human spheres. In between the two, semi-divine entities found their place. Among them, as intermediary, were *ꜥḥ.w* (the blessed dead), *mwt.w* (the damned dead), demons, and the king. The *akh* was also on the boundary between the world of the living and that of the dead represented by the mutual efficiency between father and son based on the mythological model of Osiris and Horus: the former granted his predecessor the mortuary offerings he needed to maintain his status as *akh* and preserved the father’s earthly position and honor as well; the latter was *akh*-effective for his son by legitimizing him on earth and protecting his interests in the afterlife³⁸.

³⁴ See p. 144-145.

³⁵ On the reasons why this specific sign might have been chosen see Janák, 2010.

³⁶ On the contrary, the recent study of Jansen-Winkel (1996, p. 205-208) shows that probably in origins no major connection existed between the terms *ꜥḥ* and *ꜥḥ.w* (“light”, “radiance”).

³⁷ Friedman, 2001, p. 47.

³⁸ Assmann, 2005, p. 339.

1.2.4. The name

Equally important for the survival of the deceased was his name (*rn*). It was indeed an essential component of individuality – just like *ba*, *ka*, body and heart – a medium possessing the essence of a being, namely one of its manifestations. In this regard, the Memphite Theology inscribed on the Shabaka Stone deals with the creation of the world, indeed achieved by Ptah by pronouncing the names of all things constituting it.

Consequently, the perpetuation of the name, namely remembering the deceased's name and pronouncing it, allowed him to continue his existence in the afterlife. A passage from the biographical inscription in the tomb of Petosiris (XXX Dynasty) at Tuna el-Gebel, the necropolis of Hermopolis, states indeed that “a man is revived (*s'nh*) when his name is pronounced (*dm*)³⁹”. Considered the importance of the name, the ancient Egyptians used to inscribe it on architectonic elements of the superstructure of tombs (doorways, façade, stelae, funerary cones) as well as on the funerary furniture, from coffins and sarcophagi up to the various objects that the deceased would need in the afterlife. The inscriptions on the public parts of the tombs, comprising the name but also the indispensable offering formula, were meant to be pronounced by whoever visited the tomb, hence assuring survival to the deceased. This is why in the wisdom-text recorded on the demotic papyrus Insinger (I century AD⁴⁰) we read that “the renewal of life before the dying is leaving his name on earth [behind] him⁴¹”.

Since the pronunciation of the name caused the individual to live, those of enemies had to remain unspoken. Consequently, they were referred to by means of negative epithets in order to deny them perpetuation and renewal. In the same way in which the remembrance of the name assured eternal life, its silence denied it forever. This is what happened to disliked rulers who had their names deliberately erased from their monuments⁴² or completely omitted in king-lists. Similarly, threats to potential evildoers often mention the obliteration of the name⁴³. Destroying the name was indeed a means to deprive its owner of power and of perpetual existence⁴⁴. Execrations rituals

³⁹ Chapel, east wall, middle register, inscription no. 81; Lefebvre, 1923a, p. 54, line 2.

⁴⁰ The composition however may date back to the end of the Ptolemaic Period.

⁴¹ Translation by Lichtheim, 1980, p. 187.

⁴² This is what Roman law labelled *damnatio memoriae*.

⁴³ Cf. Morschauser, 1991, p. 114-119.

⁴⁴ Doxey, 2001, 490.

aimed at this and, in order to achieve their purpose, instructed the performer of the ceremonial on how to properly write the enemy's name on a certain support along with how to destroy it to ritually incapacitate the opponent. The most famous among this kind of texts is certainly the *Book of Overthrowing Apophis*, aimed at the total annihilation of Ra's most dangerous enemy also through the destruction of his name⁴⁵.

On the other hand, knowing the true name of supernatural beings granted the power over it. An example of this is *the Tale of Isis and Ra*⁴⁶.

1.2.5. *The body*

The preservation of the physical body was essential to continue existence in the afterlife. As a matter of fact, it served as a support for the ka, the ba and the shadow, which had to reunite with the corpse every night. This concrete prerequisite resulted in the invention of mummification, namely a series of procedures, both chemical-physical and magical-ritual, aimed at the preservation of the body by means of artificial methods. Thanks to embalming, the process of decomposition was blocked and the deceased was turned into an eternal and divine image. Many incantations found in the funerary literature insist on body integrity. The statement that the body of the deceased has been assembled for him by the gods, a clear allusion to the myth of Osiris, is extremely recurrent in the *Pyramid Texts*. The integrity of the body was indeed a necessary precondition for the deceased to have his afterlife granted.

The ancient Egyptian language had different terms to designate the body. The living body was termed *ḥ.t* or *irw*, the latter meaning properly "form" or "being"⁴⁷. On the contrary, *ḥ3.t* indicated the dead body, whether embalmed or not. After going through the mummification process, the body was named *s'ḥ* ("mummy") or *twt*, in more general terms meaning "image"⁴⁸. In contrast to all of this, *ḏ.t* and *ḥ'w* seem to denote the physical form of the individual⁴⁹.

⁴⁵ See p. 186-190. The eradication of the name is also found in regard to execration rituals uttered against Seth. An example is proposed in the present paper at p. 210-211.

⁴⁶ See p. 159-162.

⁴⁷ In German "Gestalt", "Wesen" (Wb 1, 113.13-18).

⁴⁸ Taylor, 2001, p. 17.

⁴⁹ Contrary to Assmann (2005, p. 88-89), Walker (1996, p. 17) intends the *ḏ.t*-body as a transcendence form, different from the body itself.

1.2.6. The heart

The ancient Egyptian language has two different words that Egyptologists translate with the term “heart”: *ḥ3.ti* and *ib*. The former seems to have replaced the latter over time, but the proper difference between the individual meanings of the two terms is still a controversial question. The term *ib* is written by means of the sign of an animal heart, whereas *ḥ3.ti* is generally indicated as masculine nisbe form of *ḥ3.t* (“front”) and thus signifying “that belonging to the front”.

The word *ib* seems to act as a metonymy, namely as a collective for internal organs. It would also denote the emotions, as well as cognitions, felt by a person⁵⁰. For the ancient Egyptians the heart was actually the seat of thought, knowledge, and will, but in some instances it could also denote the self of a person⁵¹. On the contrary, *ḥ3.ti* is likely linked to the concept of individuality, consciousness and personal identity, anything which is to be acquired during one’s lifetime and which is not transmitted genetically from mother to son, as in the case of the *ib*-heart. The typical expression *ib n mw.t-i* in BD 30 shows indeed the difference between acquired and transmitted qualities. This expression derives from the fact that the ancient Egyptians believed that at birth the child inherited the internal organs (*ib* as *pars pro toto*) from his mother. Consequently the *ib*-heart ensured biological continuity from a generation to the following one, also allowing the deceased to continue living in his descendants⁵². In contrast to this, chapter BD 30 designates the *ḥ3.ti*-heart as “my heart of my forms” (*ḥ3.ti-i n ḥpr.w-i*) with the variant “my heart of my existence on earth” (*ḥ3.ti-i n wnn-i tp-t3*) in BD 30A⁵³.

However, great importance was attributed to the heart. In fact, during the embalming process, unlike other internal organs which were removed, treated separately and placed into the four canopic jars or back into the body cavity depending on the historical period, the heart was left *in situ*, untouched. From the New Kingdom on it was believed that, in order to access the afterlife, the deceased had to have his heart weighted on a scale in the Tribunal of Osiris as shown by vignettes of chapter BD 125. If the heart was lighter than the feather of Maat, which represented cosmic order, the deceased was considered worthy to continue his existence in the Netherworld. If it

⁵⁰ Bardinet, 1995, p. 79-80.

⁵¹ Toro Rueda, 2003, p. 34-36.

⁵² Assmann, 2005, p. 29-30.

⁵³ On this aspect see Fábíán, 1989, especially p. 258.

was heavier, then a demon called Ammut (‘*m-mwt*, literally “devourer of the deceased”) – depicted with the head of a crocodile, the foreparts of a lion and the hinder parts of a hippopotamus – devoured the heart, denying the afterlife to the deceased and condemning him to suffer “second death”.

1.2.7. *The shadow*

Like *ba*, *ka*, body and name, also the shadow (*šw.t*) was believed to be a component of the individual and, in particular, was considered as a physical entity. Besides, it was also a separate mode of existence, just like the *ba*, in association with whom the shadow is usually mentioned when making its first appearance in funerary literature (*Coffin Texts*). There, the *ba* is said to be “in the earth” whereas the shade is “in the inaccessible places (i.e. the burial chamber)”. Similarly, just like the *ba* had to come back to the corpse, also the shadow visited the embalmed body every night. The shadow was actually not restrained to the funerary chamber; on the contrary it could leave the tomb, moving independently from the corpse, as shown by vignettes from the *Book of the Dead* and explained in chapter BD 92. In vignettes from New Kingdom papyri, the shadow is indeed depicted as a black silhouette above the white shape of the tomb, sometimes accompanied by the human-headed bird representing the *ba*⁵⁴.

We have seen that the above discussed modes of being are fundamental for the survival of the deceased. If only one of them was destructed, the expectation of living the promised afterlife would fail completely and the deceased would meet definitive death. This means nothing less than total destruction. This is the reason why execration rituals in particular insist on annihilating every single element making up the victim in order to destroy it completely and forever, causing the fearful and feared “second death”. The most famous example in ancient Egyptian literature is certainly the ritual performed against Apophis, the enemy that the sun god has to fight every night to maintain the cosmic order of the world⁵⁵. Nevertheless also other ritual practices such as feasting on gods can cause the separation of these elements and possibly result in the

⁵⁴ Allen, 2001, p. 277-278.

⁵⁵ For the ritual overthrowing of Apophis see p. 186-190.

destruction of some of them. An example is spell PT 273-274 but this concept occurs also in many other spells⁵⁶.

1.3. Death as a cycle

The prototype of death offered by Osiris was only one of the conceptions that the ancient Egyptians had of passing away. For instance, others stand in opposition to the achievement of a new existence and confinement of this god in the Netherworld. They consist of a cyclical view of life and death and depend on the conception of the cosmos and in particular of time. Next to the linear passing of time, a cyclical one also existed. This pattern was called *nḥḥ* and was the time of eternal return and renewal. Consequently, this is the time associated with Ra and the daily course of the sun. In contrast to this is *d.t*, the aspect of time represented by Osiris. He, as god of the dead, is immutable and imperishable and embodies immortal continuation and endurance. This aspect of his nature is also reflected in one of his epithets, namely *Wennefer* (*wnn-nfr*), literally meaning “he who remains matured”⁵⁷.

The cyclical existence represented by Ra takes the form of his daily journey through sky and Netherworld in the bark of millions. The daily circle of the sun was consequently the perfect promise of rebirth and, just like the disk was delivered regenerated every morning after dying (i.e. setting) in the evening, the deceased wished to meet the same fate. Next to this, other cyclical interpretations of death also existed. For instance, lying in the coffin was also viewed as a return to the womb. The inner coffin embodied the goddess Nut, the divine mother, who, in the Late Period, was indeed depicted on the inside of the lid, embracing the deceased and protecting him. In texts, the goddess could either promise the deceased that she would deliver him again as a star or that he would never be born again. In this case, rebirth and rejuvenation will just take place inside the coffin⁵⁸. Like the achievement of immortality through vindication, which is inspired by Osiris, the image of renewal as a return to the womb was similarly suggested by Ra entering in the body of Nut⁵⁹. The union of the deceased with his mother mirrors indeed the setting of the sun god at evening. Thus, images and

⁵⁶ See p. 47-63.

⁵⁷ Assmann, 2001, p. 77-78.

⁵⁸ Assmann, 2005, p. 170.

⁵⁹ For Ra being swallowed by Nut see p. 145-149.

expressions used in solar hymns in reference to the setting of the sun and in funerary literature for the placing of the mummy in the coffin practically coincide.

Life in ancient Egypt also revolved around other cycle of nature, which similarly represented the promise of eternal life. The Nile River and its floods were certainly one of the most important of such images, along with the eternal cycle of vegetation. Sirius (Egyptian *spd.t* and Greek Sothis), the brightest star in the Earth's night sky, was also representative of this conception. After disappearing from view for a period of seventy days, the star reappeared in the sky with the promise of rebirth. The seventy days of invisibility acquired a deep symbolical meaning and consequently became the proper duration of the embalming process, at the end of which the deceased was ready for rebirth, just like Sirius. Similarly, what is like a star deity, *sk-wr*, is said to live after his death, clearly alluding to this concept of celestial death and renewal⁶⁰. Crops, and thus the grain god Neper, embodied the same concept in regard to the cycle of vegetation⁶¹. Such kinds of cyclical renewal were indeed witnessed by the ancient Egyptians first hand and were therefore necessarily considered as real. Besides, also the very existence of creation was believed to be cyclical too and the ancient Egyptians believed that the world would go back to the state preceding creation, i.e. the Nun, the dark and motionless primeval ocean, to which living beings as well as gods had to return⁶². The end of all time is the necessary beginning for the cyclical renewal of creation, recreating the so called "first time", namely when creation came into being for the first time.

1.4. The euphemisms of death

Despite the fact that death was not the end but a temporary phase to go through to achieve afterlife and perpetual renewal, the ancient Egyptians show a certain restraint when openly writing about it. When someone died, they preferred to refer to passing away by means of euphemisms and metaphors instead of straightforwardly. Some of the terms used to build these images have been collected by Zandee in his lexical study on death as an enemy⁶³.

One of those metaphors was the dead departing from the world of the living as if it were a simple voyage. The verb *mni* ("to moor") designates the end of a river trip and

⁶⁰ On Neper's death see p. 77-80.

⁶¹ On *sk-wr*'s death see p. 80-81.

⁶² On the reversion to the state preceding creation see p. 34-36.

⁶³ Zandee, 1960.

is particularly appropriate. Not by chance indeed, was it necessary to cross the Nile River to bury the deceased in the West. The use of this verb is attested as soon as the *Pyramid Texts*. Also in connection with leaving, journeying, and reaching the end of a voyage are other verbs of movement. For instance: *iwi/ũ* (“to come”), *w3i* (“to be far away”), *sbi* (“to go”), *pri* (“to go forth”), *h3‘* (“to leave”), *hpi* (“to go away”), *sm3 t3* (“to land”), *šm* (“to go away”)⁶⁴.

A second and common metaphor was death as sleep. The characteristics which equated the deceased with a person asleep were the position of the corpse (on the side or squatting), lying down without moving, and unconsciousness. Osiris is the “weary one” (*wrd*) *par excellence*. Next to *wrd* (“to be tired”) other terms suggesting passing away as sleeping are: *bn3* (“to sleep”), *b3gi* (“to be tired”), *m3‘* (“to be extended”), *nm‘* (“to sleep”), *nni* (“to be tired”), *sb3gi* (“to make tired”), *skd* (“to make asleep”), *sgnn* (“to make weak”), *sdr* (“to sleep”), *kd* (“to sleep”)⁶⁵. Similarly the expressions “to lying on one’s side” and “to put someone on one’s side” denote a dead corpse and the act of murdering someone, respectively. The main example of their employment is in reference to the Osirian myth in particular in the *Pyramid Texts*.

⁶⁴ On these terms see Zandee, 1960, p. 52-56.

⁶⁵ On these terms see Zandee, 1960, p. 81-85.

CHAPTER 2

ALL THE GODS

Osiris is the most famous dead god not only of ancient Egypt, but perhaps even of religious literature in general. His myth has always sparked the interest of scholars, from Egyptologists to anthropologists and researchers in the field of ancient world's religion. Nevertheless, as already anticipated, Osiris's death was not the only one conceived by the ancient Egyptians. Funerary texts in particular, but also non-funerary literature, offer many example of this. The idea that gods too can die is described in different ways, either outlined with euphemistic periphrasis or even depicted with cruel words. In a brief chapter of his work, Hornung¹ acknowledges that gods other than Osiris are subject to aging and could consequently suffer death. He also states that the attribution of death to gods is a customary phenomenon only from the New Kingdom on. It is true that the ancient Egyptians seem to be more familiar with this idea from a later period, but there is actually consistent evidence disseminated throughout the earlier literature, occurring as soon as the *Pyramid Texts*.

2.1. Old age and consequent death

One of the first concepts to make clear is aging, it being a notion strongly connected with that of death. So, did ancient Egyptian gods suffer old age²? Growing old is part of the human experience, and attributing it to gods could prove to be a big mistake. Nevertheless, even though always just implied, this notion seems to have been part of the divine nature too. Old deities possibly appear as soon as the Old Kingdom. In spells from the *Pyramid Texts*, we meet an entity called *nḥḥ*, which appears in various utterances as a star or being in heaven³. This term properly means “old man” and as a verb is to be translated “to become old”⁴. Yet, as a noun it also means “boy”⁵. Whereas, in PT 424 he is addressed as the brother of the pharaoh, in PT 340 (§554a) his name has the divine determinative in the pyramid of Merenra, but is determined in Neith's by the

¹ Hornung, 1982, p. 151-165.

² A few of these aspects connected with old age have been briefly analyzed in Hornung, 1982, p. 153-155.

³ Cf. for instance § 332c, § 554a, § 732a, § 909c, § 1574d, § 2005b.

⁴ Wb 2, 313.8 and 313.11-12, respectively.

⁵ Wb 2, 313.6-7.

sign of man with a stick⁶. This likely identifies him with some sort of divine old being. In the Middle Kingdom a spell from the *Coffin Texts* – CT 157 – refers to a time in which Horus was a child⁷. Later in time, the growing old of gods is much better attested. The depiction of Ra as an aged god is well-known in the figurative but also literary record and is fully developed by the XVIII Dynasty. He is never openly said to die from old age, but his daily setting in the west and consequent reemergence in the east, reinvigorated every morning, insinuate his death. However, Ra reached old age even before the establishment of the daily cycle of the sun as shown in the *Book of the Heavenly Cow*, but also grows old despite it in the *Tale of Isis and Ra*⁸.

The case of the sun god is the most obvious, yet is not the only one. This phenomenon is more evident from the Late Period, but is already alluded to at least in the XIX Dynasty. The Royal Canon of Turin (pTurin 1874 verso) is one of this evidence. It consists of a register of rulers, divided in three sections comprising gods and demigods, spirits (*ꜥḥ.w*) and mortal kings⁹. Contrary to other king-lists, the Papyrus of Turin records also the exact length of the rulers' reigns and not only their succession, quite a key element for this study. The papyrus is badly preserved, consisting of more than 300 pieces, but was likely intact when discovered around 1820. It is made up of eleven columns but, having the last one or two been cut in antiquity, it closes at the end of the Second Intermediate Period. The king-list was possibly preceded by some sort of introduction, outlining its content, but nothing of it has ever been recognized¹⁰. The divine rulers are listed in the first column (fragment 11), which, as the rest of the papyrus, is extremely fragmentary. They are in order of succession: [Ptah], Ra, [Shu], Geb, Osiris, Seth, Horus¹¹, Thoth, Maat, and *ḥr*¹². The sum of their reign's length, completely missing, follows the listing of the divine kings. The fact that gods succeeded each other on the throne, just as earthly rulers would do after them, possibly suggests that they were subject to time. Unfortunately, not all of them have the recording of their reign's length preserved. Their time in power is long-lasting but not endless and also has significant differences in duration. According to Gardiner's edition, the papyrus

⁶ Cf. Sethe, 1908, p. 284.

⁷ *m wnn ḥr m ḥrd* (De Buck, 1938, 344b).

⁸ On the aging of the sun god see p. 153-159.

⁹ The terminology is Manetho's. Cf. Waddell, 1964, p. 2-3.

¹⁰ For a general introduction on the papyrus see Ryholt, 2004. An authoritative publication of the king-list is Gardiner, 1939 and the transcription of his edition may conveniently be found in Kitchen, 1979, p. 827-844.

¹¹ So far the list corresponds also to Manetho's. Cf. Waddell, 1964, p. 2-3.

¹² Possibly a second Horus, different from Osiris's son, or Hathor. Cf. Meyer, 1904, p. 116.

attributes 736 years to Geb¹³, 200 to Seth¹⁴, 300 to Horus, 7726 to Thoth, and 200 to Maat¹⁵. The succession of their reigns is an evidence of the idea that time affected gods as well as human beings at least in terms of earthly reign. Gods are in fact given a limited time to reign, meaning that at the end of it they must retire and leave the throne to a successor. In the case of earthly kings this happens because the ruler dies. Does this apply to gods too? And is this presumed death connected with old age? The Royal Canon never mentions the possibility that the gods listed have actually died; nevertheless, a later mythological account dealing with the same topic can help us to shed some light on the matter. It too deals with the succession of divine rulers, but with different implications.

The text concerned dates back to the end of the Late Period and has been engraved on a granite monolithic shrine (Museum of Ismailia, inv. 2248) found in el-‘Arish (Ismailia) in the second half of the XIX century. The monument has been moved there in antiquity from Saft el-Henna in eastern Delta, an area in which the war god Sopdu was worshipped. Griffith¹⁶ attributed it to the Ptolemaic Period. In more recent times scholars tend to date it to the XXX Dynasty¹⁷ but no cartouche is preserved for a more accurate date. The naos was consecrated to Sopdu. Its interior, reserved for the god’s statue, is engraved with five registers of divine representations, whereas on the outside a mythological text has been recorded. In his edition of the text, Goyon entitled it *Les Travaux de Chou et Les Tribulations de Geb*¹⁸. The composition deals with the mythological succession of reigns of gods and with that of Geb in particular. The first ruler mentioned is the sun god, who is said to have become true of voice (*m3 ‘ hrw*) and who consequently left the throne of Egypt to his heir Shu, the latter in his turn succeeded by his son Geb. This is exactly the same concept expressed in the king-list of the Turin papyrus, namely the fact that gods at a certain point leave their reign to a descendant. However, this text gives us further information on this procedure. The

¹³ The years’ number is recorded on a separate fragment (fragment 7).

¹⁴ Meyer, 1904, p. 116. On the contrary, Gardiner recognizes only the traces of a hundred sign (1939, p. 15, note I 16 b).

¹⁵ Meyer gives the same reading for Horus, differs in the length of Thoth’s reign, reading 3126 but admitting uncertainty in the understanding of thousands and hundreds, and silences on Maat (1904, p. 116).

¹⁶ 1890, p. 71.

¹⁷ Cf. Schneider (1998, p. 239-240) who attributes the redaction of the text to the reign of Nectanebo II on the basis of a cross-examination of both the myth and the historical events of the XXIX and XXX Dynasty, which he considers to be the background of the mythological account of succession. See his work in general for a political interpretation of the story. As for the deaths of Ra and Shu narrated in the myth, see p. 158-159 and 221-224, respectively.

¹⁸ Goyon, 1936.

designation of Ra-Harakhty as *m3' hrw* suggests indeed that not only has his time as a divine ruler expired, but also Shu has succeeded to him because he has died. His designation as true of voice is none other than a euphemism to refer to his death, and somehow also quite explicit, being *m3' hrw* the typical title of deceased people. However, despite the political reading of the rest of the myth, from a literary point of view the departure of Ra, become true of voice, does not seem connected with a violent death. It seems more a withdrawal at the end of Ra's given time, something resembling more a natural death, a consequence of the passing of time.

Further evidence supporting the theory of aging gods is given by Thoth's epithets and competence. As a time-measurer¹⁹ he is also assigning a limited length of time to each pharaoh's reign. A temple inscription from Edfu addresses him as the "reckoner of time for gods and men"²⁰. This is also connected with what we read about the Ogdoad in the same temple. The Ogdoad²¹ was a group of eight primeval deities which preexisted creation and by the end of the New Kingdom is established on the western bank of the Nile, later identified with the mound of Djeme in the area of Medinet Habu. There, they received a funerary cult and texts about them read that they were embalmed and ferried to their resting place. This happened "after that their lifetime was completed" (*m-ht km 'h'-sn*)²².

The verb *km* means "to complete" and is used also in connection with time and consequently with the end of one's lifetime. The fact that this concept applies to gods is not only suggested by the passages cited below but also by a deity himself: Kematef. His name means indeed "he who has completed his time"²³ and he was believed to have emerged from the primeval water in the form of a serpent. As a creator god he was also considered to be the dead form of Amun in Medinet Habu and was supposed to be buried there. The mound of Djeme was actually termed the "Netherworld of Kematef". The fact that he was essentially conceived as a dead god, together with the meaning of his name, suggests that Kematef has been affected by time and that at the end of his lifespan he simply passed away. On the contrary, it is said of Amun-Ra, who sets but

¹⁹ On this aspect of Thoth as a lunar deity see Boylan, 1922, p. 83-87 and in particular p. 84-85 for his role of determiner of the lifespan of men and gods.

²⁰ Chassinat, 1892, p. 112.

²¹ On the Ogdoad of Heliopolis and the ancestor gods of Edfu and Esna chapter 8.

²² Edfu I, 289, 6-7. For this texts see p. 244.

²³ Alternatively, since he was a snake deity his name could be intended as an allusion to the unsurpassed speed of the serpent (Barta, 1980, col. 384).

comes back again, that his “lifetime has no end”²⁴ and that he rejuvenates day after day without coming to an end²⁵. Almost the same is stated of Amun, yet suggesting that, even though his time is endless, the god is actually said to be growing old and to rejuvenate, meaning that this god undergoes time anyway. This is observable in the following passage from the decrees in favor of the queen Nes-khons, wife of Pinedjem II (XXI Dynasty), for Amun (Cairo Museum CG 58032):

pCairo CG 58032

<i>nhy.t sbby rnp.wt nn drw ḥ'w-f</i>	The eternal, who wanders through years and whose lifetime has no end,
<i>i3w rnp.w sbb (n)hh</i>	who grown old and rejuvenated, wanders through eternity;
<i>nhh ir.w ihwn-f</i> ²⁶	who grows old and has spent his youth.

Similarly, in a hymn of the Papyrus Chester Beatty IV (British Museum EA 10684), dated to the XIX Dynasty, we read that Horus will be young and grow old²⁷.

In a passage from the *Stundenwachen* dealing with the death of Osiris and with something that looks like a reference to the return to the Nun, it is said that every god who reaches old age will return to the land where they originated. Not only is this a mention of the fact that deities are aging but also that they will possibly reverse to the primeval state, namely cease their existence and start a new cycle when the world will be created again. In the lines immediately following, in which Osiris is addressed, the god is encouraged to live and promised to become old (*i3w*). It would be an empty promise if old age was not conceived as part of the cycle of divine beings. The passage reads as follows:

Stundenwachen, third hour of the night

<i>shpr-k sdb-k</i>	You are made existent, you are restored to life,
<i>i3w-k wd3-k ipw</i> ²⁸	you will become old, you will be intact.

²⁴ *nn km ḥ'w-k* (pBerlin 3049, 15,2; Assmann, 1975, p. 286). Similarly also *nn km rnp.wt.k*, “your years has no end” (pBerlin 3049, 16,2; Assmann, 1975, p. 287).

²⁵ pBerlin 3049; Assmann, 1975, p. 282.

²⁶ Golénischeff, 1927, p. 173, lines 21-22; Assmann, 1975, p. 310, no. 131.

²⁷ Assmann, 1975, p. 403.

²⁸ Transliteration after Junker, 1910, p. 87, §§ 19-20.

All of this suggests that ancient Egyptian gods experienced the passing of time, grew old as a consequence of it, and likely died at the end of their lifespan. This stands in clear opposition to a death by violence and appears to be more in connection with “predestination”, namely to the lifecycle assigned to each god by Thot, the reckoner of time. Nevertheless, as we have seen, their death as a consequence of this is generally implied, indirectly referred to or mentioned by means of euphemistic expressions.

2.2. The West, the place created for the gods

As we have just seen, ancient Egyptian sources used to deal with the idea that gods could experience death without violence being necessarily implied, as in the case of other instances according to which gods were actually murdered. Despite this, two compositions from the *Book of the Dead* show us that the idea of mortality was likely part of gods’ divine nature. So, practically, not only *could* gods die, but they actually *had to*. Two spells state indeed that not only must every god die but also that this is something depending on the will of the creator god himself.

Spell BD 17, the longest of the entire collection, is part of the formulae for elevation and transfiguration and is one of the most diffused texts, occurring from the early XVIII Dynasty. Upper-Egyptian features suggest Thebes as the place where the composition was edited, something which probably happened during the early XIII Dynasty, more specifically during the reigns of Sobekhotep III to V²⁹. Starting with the identification of the deceased with the sun god, BD 17 is characterized by the interposition of the question “what is that?” followed by explanations. The following passage is an example of this, as a sort of test of knowledge rather than a teaching. Despite its content, primarily concerning deities and their features, the spell may have direct relations with the context of embalming³⁰. One of the question posed concerns the West, realm of Osiris and residence of the dead, and in the following gloss we find two important key concepts.

²⁹ The arguments supporting this dating are discussed in Rößler-Köhler, 1979, p. 340-342.

³⁰ Quirke, 2013, p. 52.

BD 17

<i>prt rs sw</i>	What is that?
<i>imnt.t [8] pw</i>	It is the West.
<i>ir-n-tw-s n b3.w ntr.w htf wd(.t) wsir</i>	It was made for the bas of the gods at the command of Osiris,
<i>nb dw imnt.t</i>	lord of the western mountain.
<i>imnt.t pw</i>	It is the West.
<i>nw pw rdi-n r' h3 ntr nb r-s</i>	This is where Ra caused every god to descend.
<i>h'-n h3-n-f hr-s³¹</i>	Then he fought for it (i.e. the West) ³² .

First of all, the text declares that the West (*imnt.t*) has been created for the bas of the gods. However, this statement would lead to the following possible conclusion: the West originated from the gods' need of a place to rest. And gods needed it because they used to die. As a matter of fact, as the text goes on, it is affirmed that every god will descend (*h3*) there, a clear synonym for “dying”. At the same time the gloss explains that it was Ra who caused them to enter the West, whereas the creation of the reign is directly attributed to Osiris' command. So, not only does their existence depend on the creator god, but so does their death. This might possibly be determined by the mortality of the Sun god himself, who as a mortal decreed his same fate for every living being. Alternatively, it could be a reference to the retinue of gods taking part with Ra in the daily regeneration after the voyage through the Netherworld (i.e. the descent in the West). However, the meaning is unchanged, since, to take part in the daily regeneration of the sun god, it is first necessarily to decline. Still, according to a different interpretation, the mention of the bas of the gods might alternatively simply refer to the bas of the blessed dead, indeed called “gods” after their transfiguration.

Chapter BD 17 also has an antecedent in CT 335, a very widespread composition, but, although some sections of the two works are very likely, the earlier version of the spell does not actually report this passage³³.

This spell, however, is not an isolated case. The *Book of Gates*, indeed, recalls the same fact in two interesting passages which are found at the very beginning of the book, in the first division of the Duat. The alabaster sarcophagus of Seti I, on which the oldest surviving version of the first hour is preserved, shows, a vignette depicting the

³¹ Transcription based on Lepsius, 1842, pl. VII.

³² As the glosses of the Middle Kingdom version of this spell show, it is a clear reference to a battle against the gods' enemies (Röbner-Köhler, 1979, p. 172-173).

³³ Cf. Faulkner, 1973, p. 260-269.

Western Mountain divided into two parts in order to allow the Sun's bark, in which the Re is depicted as a beetle, to sail between them and enter the Duat (first scene). On the right of the boat stand twelve gods, described as the "gods of the desert (i.e. necropolis)" (*ntr.w smy.t*), whereas on its left are other twelve deities, called "the gods of the Western desert" (*ntr.w s.t imnt.t*). The texts of the two captions, found in the upper (scene 1) and lower register (scene 4) respectively, are almost identical³⁴. Text referring to the gods to the right of the boat, indicated as *ntr.w smy.t* reads as follows:

Book of Gates, first division

hpr.w m r' m p3(w).t-f pr.w m ir.t-f

They (i.e. these gods³⁵) who have come into being from Ra in the primeval times, come out from his eye.

wd-f n-sn s.t imnt.t smy.t

He decreed for them (to be) in the secret place of the West³⁶.

stp-n-s rmt ntr.w 'w.t nb.t hrr.t nb.t km3 tn ntr pn '3

It has chosen³⁷ human beings, gods, every quadruped, and every snake, which this great god created.

ntr pn wd-f shr.w-sn m h.t is 'r-f m t3 km3-n-f tn imnt.t ir(.t)-f³⁸

This god, he commanded³⁹ their affairs after having approached (them) in the earth⁴⁰ which he created for his right eye⁴¹.

These passages too state that the Ra, who begot the gods, caused them to be in the western desert, i.e. to die. Again, the idea does not suggest a death by violence but something depending on the will of the creator god. In this sense, a divine death would be more like something which occurs "naturally". This is emphasized by the association of deities with human beings and animals, mortal by definition.

The concept of gods leaving for in the West is not restricted to the funerary literature, on the contrary it is also found in stories such as *The Contendings of Horus*

³⁴ The beginning of the lower register is missing in all versions of the text. Minor variation between the texts of the two register are listed in Hornung, 1980, p. 42.

³⁵ In this case transfigured human beings are intended since the creation of humankind is recalled. Men's creation was explained by means of a pun between *rmt* ("people") and *rm.yt* ("tears").

³⁶ *smy.t* is found in Seti I's version only. All other versions simply read "the secret place". This addition is also missing in the lower register of Seti I.

³⁷ On the debate about *stp/stp* and its possible meaning in this context see Hornung, 1980, p. 33-34.

³⁸ Transcription based on Hornung, 1979, p. 1-3.

³⁹ The text has *wd shr.w* instead of the common *iri shr.w*.

⁴⁰ Hornung (1980, p. 35) suggest to translate *m t3* "in the earth", intending consequently the Netherworld, in opposition to *tp-t3* "on the earth". The different between the two is clear in text having both these expressions next to each other.

⁴¹ The wall inscription of the XXVI Dynasty tomb of Pediamenopet (TT 33) has "for his left eye". On the contrary, this last statement has been omitted in the version of Seti I.

and Seth. It is recorded on the recto of the papyrus Chester Beatty I, written at Thebes under Ramses V. However, the composition is very likely the adaptation of a Middle Kingdom story⁴². As typical of the Ramesside age, the text has a comic approach to the matter, which can be easily recognized in the behavior of some of the gods, even though dealing with basic mythological concepts as well⁴³. At a certain point of the narration, the undecided divine tribunal which should decree Osiris's heir writes a letter to the dead god, asking him to express his view on the trial. After exchanging letters with Ra-Harakhty, in his second dispatch Osiris writes a curious statement.

The Contendings of Horus and Seth

y3 iḥ p3y ḥpr.w dy ḥtp.kw(i) ḥr imn.tt

iw-tn n-bnr r-dr.w sp 2 sp 2

nīm im-sn iw-f nḥt r-i

ḥr m-ky [15,7] gm-sn grgy m ir.t

istw ir m-dr iry.w pth '3 rs inb-f nb 'nḥ-
t3.wy t3 p(.t) istw bn dd-f n n3 sb3.w nty
(m-)ḥnw s.t

i ir-tn ḥtp imn.tt [15,8] r tnw grḥ.t m p3
nty nsw (ws)ir im

ḥr-ir ḥr-s3 ntr.w iw p '.t rhy.t ḥtp m p3 nty
tw-k im m-r- ' i-n-f n-i⁴⁴

Oh! What is my existence here resting in
the West

(when) you all are outside?

Who is there among you who is mightier
than me?

So, behold, they have discovered falsehood
as an accomplishment.

So, when Ptah the Great, south of his wall,
lord of Ankh-tawy, created the sky, did not
he tell the stars which are therein:

"Every night you will set (in) the West, in
which is the King Osiris"?

And after gods, patricians and commoners
likewise shall set/rest in the place where
you are. So he said to me.

Similarly to BD 17, we are told that the gods' setting in the West depends on the will of the creator god, Ptah in this instance. As well as he created the sky and its inhabitants, the stars, he also caused them to set, i.e. to die. But mortality is not only restricted to the stars. In the next sentence we are actually told that also gods, as well as people, shall descend in the place where Osiris is. It is thus important to note that in this passage divine beings are equaled both to patricians (*p '.t*) and commoners (*rhy.t*). This stresses that, since people are mortal, so are gods. Nevertheless, the comparison between divine beings and people is quite relevant, since the latter are destined to enter the West because of their mortal nature.

⁴² Bresciani, 1969, p. 343.

⁴³ Wente, 2003b, p. 91.

⁴⁴ pChester Beatty, I, 15,6-15,8; Gardiner, 1932, p. 58.

2.3. Physical deterioration of dead gods

The idea of mortality and “predetermination” to descend into the West is also connected with another crucial key concept, that of physical integrity. The ancient Egyptians knew very well that the main consequence of death was the decay of the body, something that absolutely needed to be avoided in order to continue one’s existence. This is the reason why they experimented on techniques to preserve the physical integrity of the corpse, resulting in mummification. The aim of embalming was indeed to impede the loss of integrity and thus decomposition. Spell BD 154, an incantation to prevent the body from passing away (*r3 n tm rdl.t sby h3.t*), tells us in details how the deceased’s corpse will not putrefy and turn into worms when he will descend into the Land of Eternity, thanks to the treatment that his son, equated with Horus, has come to perform on him. The spell firstly appeared on the shroud of Thutmose III but is extremely rare before the Late and Ptolemaic Periods, when it will be more common⁴⁵. Something interesting to point out in BD 154 is the use of the term *hw3*⁴⁶, meaning “to consume” or “to decompose”, a concept categorically opposed to that of resurrection. The term is generally used to negate that decomposition will ever affect the deceased, whose body, like those of the gods, was considered to be imperishable. In PT 723 it is stated indeed that the deceased’s bones are made of metal and his limbs of gold, since his body belongs to a god⁴⁷. Being metal considered incorruptible, the body of the deceased – and that of deities in particular – was thus not expected to decay. This is exactly what BD 154 expects for the deceased, properly embalmed and hence the text gives a detailed and raw description of what the corpse is being saved from. Among the creatures said to decay – and consequently who have died – the text mentions birds, fishes, snakes, worms and quadrupeds⁴⁸. It is a long list⁴⁹ comprising every living creature, except for

⁴⁵ Quirke, 2013, p. 383-384.

⁴⁶ On terms concerning decomposition see Zandee, 1960, p. 56-60 and for *hw3* in particular p. 58-59.

⁴⁷ PT 723, §§ 2244.a-c; Faulkner, 1969b, p. 72:

gd -mdw h3 n(i)t pn tsi tw hr ks.w-k b3.w 'wt-k nbw.t
h 'k pw n sw ntr

nn hsd-f nn htm-f nn hw3-f.

“Words to say: oh you, Neith! Raise up on your metal bones and your golden limbs.

This body of yours belongs to a god.

It does not mold, it is not destroyed, it does not decay”.

A similar variant also occurs in CT 519.

⁴⁸ I prefer to translate the word *w.t*, meaning “herds” or “flocks” in more general term, denoting all four-footed animals, in opposition to people and birds (Cf. Wb 1, 170.7).

⁴⁹ Its aim is to demonstrate that death is awaiting every living creature and that it is unavoidable. This image persists up to the Ptolemaic Period sources in which we read that “the big ones as well as the small

human beings⁵⁰. Surprisingly gods and goddesses are included among those earthly creatures which Ra has made to decay.

BD 154

*nn ir-ı msdd-k hwy 3 mry [6] wi k3-k nn
win-f wi šd-k wi m h.t-k*

*k3-tm hwy3 mı nw ir-n-k r ntr [7] nb r ntr.t
nb.t r 'w.t nb.t ddf.t nb.t*

*sby-ty-f(y) pr b3-f m-ht m(w).t-f h3-f m-ht
sby-f*

*swt pw [8] hnn-f ks.w-f tmw hwy3-sn
sm3m.yw h'w sgnn.y ntr.w⁵¹ ir.yw i(w)f m-
'dw*

*[9] sns-n-f hwy3-f hpr-f n fnt.w 'š3.w tm fnt.w
tm ir-f
iw-f sbw n ir.t šw m ntr nb m ntr.t nb.t [10]
m 3pd.w nb m rm.w nb m hfy.t nb.t m
ddf.wt nb m 'w.t nb.t tm sp 2*

*hr ntt st rdi n-ı hr [11] h.wt-sn si3-n-sn wi
in snd-ı hr-n-sn*

*iw swt hr-nb m mitt m(w)t-t(y)-fy m 'w.t
nb.t m [12] 3pd.w nb m rm.w nb m hfy.t
nb.t m ddf.t nb 'nh.t(i) m(w).t<s⁵³>(i)*

I have not done what you hate. Ah! Then, your ka should love me and it should not reject me when you take me in your cortege,

so that I may not decay like what you have made for every god, every goddess, every quadruped, and every snake.

He who will pass away, his ba goes out after his death, and he descends after his going.

And still there is his decaying: all his bones, they decay. The slaughtering of the limbs, the enfeeblement of the gods(?) the flesh made bad⁵².

He rots, he decays, he becomes a whole mass of worms, all worms he makes.

He passes away at the eye of Shu as every god and as every goddess, as every bird, as every fish, as every snake, as every worm, as every quadruped, entirely, entirely, because they are given to me on their bellies. They have recognized me; it is the fear of me they have dreaded.

So everyone likewise shall die as every quadruped, as every bird, as every fish, as every snake, as every worm alive or dead⁵⁴.

ones and all cattle” are subjected to the same mortal fate (Cf. Schott, 1968, p. 63). On the contrary, in *The Contendings of Horus and Seth* animals are not mentioned in the second letter written by Osiris to Ra-Harakhty, in which only stars, gods and men are said to be resting in the West (see p. 31).

⁵⁰ In this instance we cannot intent the term “god” as the designation of transfigured human beings because, otherwise, the spell would be meaningless. Stating that transfigured human beings have rotten after their death is not an encouragement for the deceased being embalmed. On the contrary, declaring that a proper embalming will save him from the same decay to which gods are condemned is a valid reassurance, proving the efficiency of the preservation practice.

⁵¹ Quirke (2013, p. 383) reads *sgnn ks.w*, “the limpness of the bones”.

⁵² Quirke (2013, p. 383) reads *ir.yw iw f m 'dw sns-n-f hwy3-f*, “the making of the flesh into fat, as he fuses in his rotting”. However, the term *'d* with the determinative of the sparrow is not attested (cf. Wb 1, 239.8-16).

⁵³ A mistake for the stative ending *.ti*.

⁵⁴ The transcription is based on the version of the papyrus of Nu (Budge, 1899, pl. 36-37; Quirke, 2013, p. 383).

The assertion that gods as animals have been caused to decay has a dramatic effect. As a matter of fact, admitting that the body of a god rots means that he can possibly be destroyed and completely cease to exist, undergoing the so called “second death”, which was definitely unacceptable. For instance, the lines just above deal with the example of Atum, whose body does not pass away (*n bsy h3.t-f*) and who cannot perish (*iw.ty sk-f*).

2.4. The reversion to the primeval state

Before the creation of the world, the universe was an infinite ocean of primeval water, a place of uniform darkness and inertness. It was called *nw(i)*, “the watery one”, and was regarded as a god called Nu (later Nun). It is the same matter to which the world will return at the end of this cycle of time. After millions of years, only Atum and Osiris, representing the creative force, will survive before creation returns. The first clear statement of the end of creation occurs in CT 1130 but further and interesting details are only found in BD 175⁵⁵. The spell, a formula for not dying a second time, opens with Atum asking Thot what will become of the children of Nut who have caused disorders. The allusion is likely to Seth and Osiris, the former murderer of the latter. Thot answers that Atum should not be concerned about it. As a matter of fact, as reckoner of time, he has limited their lifespans as a consequence of their action. Thus “their years have been shortened and their months have been drawn near”⁵⁶. The restriction of the time of gods means that their life will actually have an end. Seth is most likely one of those, as “son of Nut”⁵⁷ and hostile god who could definitely have caused the wrongdoings listed by Atum. The cause of their death will possibly be the return of creation to the state of chaos and inertness embodied by the primeval waters. Gods will then cease to exist until creation comes again in an eternal cycle. These ideas are expressed in the second part of the incantation, by means of a dialogue between Atum and Osiris. They are the only ones who will survive and Atum will turn into a snake, which men and gods will not know and see. The fact that everything will go back

⁵⁵ For parallels of this chapter see Otto, 1962.

⁵⁶ *shw rnp.wt-sn stknw 3bd.w-sn*.

⁵⁷ In texts the name of Seth is often substituted by “son of Nut”. The examples are really numerous. For instance, it occurs various times in the *Contendings of Horus and Seth* (pChester Beatty I; lines 1,9; 2,1; 4,4; 4,6; 5,1; 16,4), in pBremner-Rhind (pBM 10188; line 30,10), in the papyrus of Imuthes (pMMA 35.9.21; lines 38,10; 38,12). For the complete list of attestations see LGG VI, 82-83 and on the possible meaning of this epithet see te Velde, 1967, p. 28.

to the state it had before the creation⁵⁸ means that gods too will temporarily cease to exist. So, presumably, they will not suffer a violent death. Nevertheless deities will actually be annihilated even though for a brief moment. This could be likely seen as an example of a “natural death”, caused by the command of the creator god. Since Thoth says to have shortened the life of the children of Nut, the return to the Nun could actually be the fate met by gods at the end of their lifespan. Thus, according to this, when a god dies, he will decline to the primeval state of chaos. Then, since time is cyclical, at a certain point, those gods who have reverted to their original state will come into existence again. Does this possibly imply that gods cannot actually be killed? It seems therefore quite likely, at least when not dealing with a violent death. At this point, it is worth underlining that Osiris, who is indeed a dead god, is not said to be returning to the Nun. Along with Atum, the creator god, he will be a survivor of the end of time. Something that the two of them have in common is actually the fact that, as personification of the sun at sunset, Atum also experiences death. Indeed, after the daily journey in his solar bark, Ra sets in the West in the form of a tired ram-headed old god, starting his night journey in the Underworld. Whereas Osiris is essentially a dead god who, after a proper restoration, is resuscitated but confined in the realm of the dead, Atum emerges from the underworld every morning, rejuvenated in the form of a scarab. A second difference between the two of them is that Osiris suffered a violent death, while the latter’s descent in the West is part of his daily cycle of life. Nevertheless, both Osiris and Atum experienced death for a reason or another. This, together with the fact that Atum is the creator god, might be one of the reasons allowing them to avoid the return to Nun. It actually appears that this last event is strictly connected with the end of each god’s lifetime. Thus, since Osiris is already dead and Atum dies cyclically they could possibly escape this rule.

A further reference to the return to the Nun is found in the *Book of the Heavenly Cow*, a myth in which the sun god Ra is described as a mature deity⁵⁹, considered no longer suited to rule by humankind, who consequently rebels against him. Ra thus orders to his cortege to gather the gods for him in order to ask them for advice. In this regard, he makes an interesting statement (verses 19-20). He says:

⁵⁸ Many allusions to the return to chaos occur also in magical texts. For references see Hornung, 1983, p. 165.

⁵⁹ See p. 154-156.

Book of the Heavenly Cow

*ii-k hn ' -sn r hw.t- '3.t dd-sn shr.w-sn
dr(i).w<t>
iw-i m nw.w r bw hpr-n-i im⁶⁰*

Come with them in the temple where they
will express their firm advises.
I shall return to the Nun, the place where I
came into existence.

Now, since Ra as a character of the myth is very old, it is fairly tempting to interpret his statement as a reference to the end of the eternal cycle of return and emergence from the primeval waters in which all creation takes part. When Ra utters this sentence, he probably means that, if the consultation with the gods does not have the result expected, he will step aside and abandon his reign. In this sense, the return to the Nun might be intended as a consequence and result of his old age.

The same concept possibly occurs in the funerary liturgy of the mysteries of Osiris as recorded in *Stundenwachen*. In a passage taken from the third hour of the night, the passing away of Osiris is described as the return to the primeval place where he was born, originating from Ra. The statement immediately following enlarged this notion to all the gods, likely after reaching old age. If this interpretation is correct, it would suggest that aging was something suffered also by all divine beings. However, the passage concerned reads as follows:

Stundenwachen, third hour of the night

*hpr-n sb ntr r t3.wy-f
r bw p3w.ti ms-f im
hpr-n-f im m r '
ntr nb pw
hpr izw-f m ms ...
sm-sn r t3<.w>-sn ms-sn im-f
t3 sp hpr-sn im-f m r '

'nh-sn nds-sn
hpr-sn m h '3.w⁶²*

It occurred that the god (i.e. Osiris) went to his lands,
to the primeval place where he was born,
where he came into existence from Ra.
It is every god
who reaches⁶¹ his old age in ...
So they go to their land, where they were born,
the primeval land in which they came into existence
from Ra.
They will live, be young.
They will be young men⁶³.

⁶⁰ Maystre, 1941, p. 61; Hornung, 1982b, p. 2, §§ 19-20.

⁶¹ Literally "becomes".

⁶² As a child *h '3* seems to be an older being in regard to *nds* (Wb 3, 42.1).

⁶³ Transliteration by Junker, 1910, p. 87, §§ 10-18.

2.5. Death in euphemistic terms

2.5.1. Gods going to their kas

The ka, or “double” as it is sometimes reductively translated, is generally considered as the vital force of a person. Along with the ba and other elements, it is one of the parts that make up men and which continue to exist after the physical death. According to this view, expressions such as “to go to one’s ka” (*sm hr k3-f*⁶⁴) or “to go with one’s ka” (*sb hn ‘ k3-f*⁶⁵) has always been well-known and common euphemism for “to die”. Anyway, this expression was not just for private people to use but also occurs in the *Pyramid Texts* in regard to the deceased king and to gods.

Spells dealing with dying gods in similar terms appear as early as in king Unas’s pyramid and must therefore be part of a more ancient tradition. The fact that similar statements are found as soon as the appearance of funerary literature is very significant and demonstrates that the Ancient Egyptians were necessarily already familiar with this idea. Otherwise, they would never have felt ready to write it down, eternizing it. The tradition of this utterance in the royal funerary literature of the Old Kingdom persists for the entire V and VI Dynasties, up to queen Neith.

These examples are thus among the most ancient evidence of divine death. In this regard, since the Ancient Egyptians were facing such a thorny issue for the first time, it was quite natural for them to show a certain reticence in writing about it and refer to gods passing away in very euphemistic terms. Moreover, this terminology underlines the fact that they have not ceased to exist but, on the contrary, continue their existence in the afterlife.

Various spells deal with this concept. Utterance PT 25 is a censuring spell and the departure of the deceased to his ka has been interpreted along with the corresponding image of the rising scent of the incense⁶⁶. On the contrary, spell PT 447 is about the deceased being welcomed by Nut, represented by the coffin itself, and is probably to put in connection with the placing of the mummy in the sarcophagus⁶⁷. This context, once again, underlines the real meaning of such euphemism.

⁶⁴ PT 447, PT 450, PT 568.

⁶⁵ PT 25, PT 478, PT 512.

⁶⁶ This is what Assmann calls a “sacramental explanation”. For its meaning and examples see Assmann, 2005, p. 349-368.

⁶⁷ Assmann, 2005, p. 97-98.

PT 25

*sb*⁶⁸ *sb*⁶⁹ *hn* ' *k3-f sb hr hn* ' *k3-f sb sth hn* '
k3-f
sb dhw.ti hn ' *k3-f sb dwn-* ' *n.wi hn* ' *k3-f sb*
wsir hn ' *k3-f*
*sb (m)hn.t(i)-ir.ti*⁷⁰ *hn* ' *k3-f sb.t(i) ddk hn* '
k3-f

He who goes goes with his ka. Horus goes with his ka. Seth goes with his ka. Thoth goes goes with his ka. Dunaunui goes with his ka, Osiris goes with his ka. Mechenti-irti goes with his ka. You too have gone with your ka⁷¹.

PT 447

šm šm hr k3-f sb hr hr k3-f sb sth hn ' *k3-f*
šm dhw.ti hr k3-f šm dwn- ' *n.wi hr k3-f šm*
wsir hr k3-f
šm (m)hn.t(i)-ir.ti hr k3-f šm.t(i) dd-k hr
k3-f
 { ... }
w 'b-k w 'b ntr.w šm.w hr k3.w-sn
*w 'b-k w 'b ntr.w šm.w tm-sn nwd*⁷³

He who goes goes to his ka. Horus goes to his ka. Seth goes to his ka. Thoth goes to his ka. Dunanui goes to his ka. Osiris goes to his ka. Mechenti-irti goes to his ka. You too have gone to your ka. { ... } Your purity is the purity of the gods who have gone to their kas⁷². Your purity is the purity of the gods who have gone and do not have a bad fate⁷⁴.

PT 450

šm šm hr k3-f šm wsir hr k3-f šm sth hr k3-f
šm (m)hn.t(i)-ir.ti hr k3-f šm N k3-f
h3 N pw šm-n-k 'nh-k nn šn-n-k is
*m(w).t*⁷⁵ -*k*

He who goes goes to his ka. Osiris goes to his ka. Seth goes to his ka. Mechenti-irti goes to his ka. N goes to his ka. Oh, is N, you are gone, may you live. You have not gone so that you may die⁷⁶.

⁶⁸ The verb *sbi* is specifically used for this kind of expressions, referring to death (Wb 3, 429.15-431.3).

⁶⁹ I intend the construction as an active participle followed by *sdm-f* form to emphasize that "he who is gone with his ka" is not supposed to come back again. A similar construction but with passive *sdm-f* and passive participle (*st3 st3.w*) is found in the Bremner-Rhind papyrus (3,1; Faulkner, 1936, p. 123) and is followed by the determinative of death. This form is analyzed in Faulkner, 1936, p. 134.

⁷⁰ *Mhn.ti-ir.ti* was originally a falcon god from Letopolis, who then, assumed the double form of "seeing" and "blind" Horus. On this see Junker, 1942, p. 16-21.

⁷¹ Transcription based on Sethe, 1908, p. 10, §§ 17a-c. The spell occurs in the pyramids of Unas, Teti, Pepi I, Merenra, Pepi II, Neith, Iput (almost completely lost). It finds collocation on the west wall of the burial chamber or, in the case of Unas and Neith, on the north one. The collocation in the sarcophagus chamber and on the west wall underlines the meaning of the spell.

⁷² Omitted in Pepi's version.

⁷³ Verb concerning a bad fate (Wb 2, 226.12). It means that gods in heaven were not supposed to suffer harm but PT 273-274 possibly demonstrates quite the opposite. This might imply a distinction between gods who were formerly earthly kings and gods themselves. Cf Mercer, 1952b, p. 423-424.

⁷⁴ Transcription based on Sethe, 1908, p. 460-462, §§ 826a-c and §§ 829d-e.

⁷⁵ In Neith's pyramid the term *m(w).t* has the same determinative as ' *r.t* in PT 364.

⁷⁶ Transcription based on Sethe, 1908, p. 463, §§ 832a-833a.

*dd md.w sbi sbi hr k3-f sb hn.t(i)-ir.ti hr
k3-f
sb ppi pn hr k3-f ir p.t*

Words to say: he who goes goes to his ka.
Mechenti-irti goes to his ka.
This Pepi goes to his ka, to the sky⁷⁷.

All the spells above, sometimes slightly different in their form but identical in the meaning, list the same deities. They are in order of appearance: Horus, Seth, Thoth, Dunanui⁷⁸, Osiris and Mechenti-irti. The choice of such gods can prove pretty interesting.

As for Osiris, his occurrence here does not surprise us. He fits perfectly in this list both because he is the Egyptian dead god *par excellence* and because the deceased pharaoh used to be identified with him. His presence also implies that the ancient Egyptians considered his death as something real, as many other allusions throughout the *Pyramid Texts* demonstrate. On the contrary, the mentioning of Horus is to be intended outside of the context of the Osirian myth and of that of royal succession. According to the latter in fact, the living king was referred to as Horus, the son of the predecessor who, as a dead, has become Osiris. If in this context we consider him as the earthly ruler, it would mean that he too, the legitimate successor, has died. Indeed, in this instance, Horus might be likely a separate deity. The god listed immediately after Horus is Seth. It has been suggested, according to a passage in PT 570, as well as to other sources, that he could possibly have been immortal. However, the spells listed above suggest quite the opposite, an idea also supported by further evidence⁷⁹. Moving on, even the god Thoth is mentioned. Together with Osiris, Seth and Horus, he also appears in the succession of rules recorded in the Royal Canon of Turin. In this sequence of divine rulers, they are preceded by Ptah, Ra, Shu and Geb, and followed by many other divine beings and after which the succession of earthly kings starts⁸⁰. Not only does the papyrus list the succession of divine reigns, but also it records their exact length, suggesting once again that, at a certain point of their history, the ancient

⁷⁷ Transcription based on Sethe, 1910, p. 277, §§1431a-b.

⁷⁸ Dunauni is a deity often depicted in the form of Horus of the eastern Desert. His name, originally meaning “Schwingen-Speizer”, was changed at the beginning of the Middle Kingdom in *dwn- wi*, “Arme-Ausbreiter” (“he who spreads out his arms”). Here, associated to Thot, Horus and Seth, Dunauni represents the east (Westendorf, 1975, p. 1152-1153). The four gods are thus the representatives of the four cardinal points: Horus of the north, Seth of the south, Thoth of the west, and “Horus of the Eastland” of the east (Mercer, 1952b, p. 17). Cf. also LGG VII, 525-526.

⁷⁹ On Seth’s presumed immortality see p. 204-206.

⁸⁰ On this subject see Hornung, 1982, p. 154, Zabkar, 1968, p. 6.

Egyptians admitted that gods too were subject to time and thus to death⁸¹. Even though the Papyrus of Turin dates back to the much later XIX Dynasty, the *Pyramid Texts* demonstrate that the idea of a limited life for gods was part of the religious concepts already in Old Kingdom. Considering that the first written collection of funerary texts necessarily derives from a more ancient tradition, this idea certainly dates back to an even earlier time. According to this, the mention of Seth, Horus and Thoth among the gods who are said to have gone to their kas can thus have been part of the very same tradition which considered them to be mortal and which led, later in time, to the composition of the Papyrus of Turin and of the myth of succession recorded on the shrine of Ismailia.

As for Mechenti-irti, whose eyes represented indeed the sun and the moon, he was a god considered to have a double nature. As a matter of fact, as a seeing god, his name is spelled *mḥnti-irty*, whereas his name is changed in *mḥnti-n-irty* if addressed as a blind god, namely when, for some reason, either the sun or the moon was not shining by day or by night respectively. Sources also designate him as the sun in the west⁸². In this way, he perfectly fits his role of prototype of the deceased king, a function recurring in many instances throughout the *Pyramid Texts*, as well as his role of protector of the pharaoh⁸³. The fact that Mechenti-irti is mentioned alone in PT 568 raises the question whether, originally, he was actually the only god alluded to in this context⁸⁴. In fact, utterance PT 17, the one listing various gods, already occurs in the pyramid of king Unas, whereas PT 586 is lacking. Of course, the latter could be part of an earlier tradition recoded only in later time and thus appearing a little later in the pyramid of Pepi. In any case, giving an answer is hardly possible.

The ambiguity of the syntax and the different possibilities of translation could also imply different readings of the spell, some of them completely changing its possible meaning. The construction of a perfective *sḏm-f* followed by a participle as its subject involving the same verb twice could express the notion of indefinite pronouns⁸⁵. Allen thus translates: “someone has gone with his ka” or “someone has gone to be with his ka”. Alternatively, the verb at the beginning could also be given a modal connotation, which could be implicit in participle, whether active or passive, since the

⁸¹ See p. 24-25.

⁸² For references see Junker, 1942, p. 23-27.

⁸³ Mercer, 1952d, p. 52.

⁸⁴ Junker, 1942, p. 68.

⁸⁵ Shmakov, 2012, p. 18.

Egyptian language appears to lack modal verbs⁸⁶. Consequently, the translation would be: “the one who is to go has gone with his ka”⁸⁷. Despite this, the interpretation of the spell remains unchanged. Then again, considering the first *sb* as a perfective participle and subject, the other verbs can be intended as statives (pseudoparticiples), just as *sb.t(i)* in §826c⁸⁸. In all these cases, the gods mentioned serve as a model for the deceased king, reassuring him as he passed away. According to this last interpretation, they would actually have died. Yet, despite this, going to their ka has not resulted in the end of their existence; on the contrary, they are still powerful and eternal divine beings. Consequently, the same will apply to the deceased king, who will live his afterlife likewise.

On the contrary, Gunn proposes a completely different translation of §1431 (PT 568), intending the first *sbi* as *sdm-f* and the second one as a prospective active participle and subject to the first *sbi*. He thus translates: “If anyone passes to his ka, *Mhn.tj-irtj* passes to his ka, this P. passes to his ka, to heaven”⁸⁹. In this way, the reading that gods can actually go to their kas is just a possibility. It would consist actually in a proper threat addressed to the gods. As a matter of fact, such formulae are well known in magical-ritual context: here the speaker warns the gods that if something evil happens to the deceased, a named god will die⁹⁰.

A very similar composition also occurs in two different spells of the *Coffin Texts*, one of which badly preserved in a single variant. Even though some parts of the utterance are unreadable, obliterating the name of some of the deities involved, we can reasonably assume that the gods mentioned are the same as those listed in the *Pyramid Texts* quoted above. Nevertheless, I prefer to transcribe the concerned passage from CT 821 with no integrations:

CT 821

sb sb hr k3-f sb hr iħr k3-f sb stš iħ(r) [...] He who goes goes to his ka. Horus⁹¹ goes to his ka. Seth goes to [...]

⁸⁶ Gardiner, 1957, p. 287.

⁸⁷ Shmakov, 2012, p. 18-19.

⁸⁸ Sethe translates PT 447: “Gegangen ist, wer ging, zu seinem Ka, gegangen ist Osiris zu seinem Ka... gegangen bist auch du zu deinem Ka” (1936a, p. 79).

⁸⁹ Gunn, 1924, p. 37.

⁹⁰ In one of such examples even Ra is mentioned. See p. 151-152.

⁹¹ The god’s name is spelled by means of sign N 31 of Gardiner’s sign list. For its reading as *ħr* cf. Daumas, 1988, p. 646-645.

[...](*h*)*r k3-f sb dwn- 'n.wi [hr k3-f] [...]*
ws[ir] hr k3-f
*sb mhn.t(i)-n-ir.ti hr k3-f*⁹²

to his ka. Dunanui [goes to his ka]
 [...]Osiris ... to his ka.
 Mechenti-irti⁹³ goes to his ka.

The other spell, CT 936, is well preserved and is very similar to PT 25, since both of them employ the preposition *hn'*. On the other hand, the composition is completely different from the point of view of the rhythm. The reprise of the first sentence after every line gives to utterance a lyrical note, confirming the fact that this kind of texts was conceived to be recited during funerary rituals. However, the only actual difference between the PT spells and the CT 936 is that Horus is not mentioned in the latter.

CT 936

sb sp 2 hn' k3-f
sb wsir hn' k3-f
sb sp 2 hn' k3-f
sb dhw.ti hn' k3-f
sb sp 2 hn' k3-f
sb stš hn' k3-f
sb sp 2 hn' k3-f
sb dwn- 'n.wi hn' k3-f
sb sp 2 hn' k3-f
sb (m)hn.t(i)-ir.ti hn' k3-f
sbi sp 2 hn' k3-f
*sb N hn' k3-f*⁹⁴

He who goes goes with his ka.
 Osiris goes with his ka.
 He who goes goes with his ka.
 Thoth goes goes with his ka.
 He who goes goes with his ka.
 Seth goes with his ka.
 He who goes goes with his ka.
 Dunaunui goes with his ka.
 He who goes goes with his ka.
 Mechenti-irti goes with his ka.
 He who goes goes with his ka.
 N goes with his ka.

This idea, even though disappearing as time passes by, returns again much later in the *Stundenwachen*, a ritual part of the dramatic Osiris's mysteries performed in the Greco-Roman temples of Dendera, Edfu and Philae. A passage referring to the first hour of the night reads indeed as follows:

⁹² Transcription based on the version of T1Bc, the only one preserved (De Buck, 1961, p. 22 f-h).

⁹³ In this case the name of the god is spelled *mhn.ti-n-ir.ti*, the form actually denoting the blind god. However, the writing of his name is not always coherent and thus in the *Pyramid Texts* it is recorded both with and without *n*, even though the latter form is the most frequent.

⁹⁴ Transcription after De Buck, 1961, p. 142 q-v.

Stundenwachen: first hour of the night

<i>sb sb hn' k3-f</i>	He who goes goes with his ka.
<i>sb hr hn' k3-f</i>	Horus goes with his ka.
<i>sb gb hn' k3-f</i>	Geb goes with his ka.
<i>sb dhw.ti hn' k3-f</i>	Thoth goes with his ka.
<i>sb sp3 hn' k3-f</i>	<i>sp3</i> goes with his ka.
<i>sb hn.t(i)-niw.ti hn' k3-f</i> ⁹⁵	<i>hn.t(i)-niw.ti</i> goes with his ka.

The terminology is once again the same. Nevertheless, half of the deities concerned has changed, substituted by Geb, *sp3* and *hn.t(i)-niw.ti*. As for *sp3*, he can represent the deceased but is also a designation of Osiris⁹⁶. Seth has probably been omitted in his role of enemy of Osiris, against whom utterances are pronounced throughout the composition more than once.

Back to the context of the *Pyramid* Texts, other allusions to gods going to their kas can be found in some other utterances (PT 478, PT 475, PT 359, PT 450, PT 512). However, their meaning differs from that of the incantation recorded above. Indeed, in these other compositions the same euphemistic expression for death is used to allude to the predecessors of the deceased king⁹⁷ in their turn transfigured into divine beings. This can be easily deduced from the context. For example, PT 475 clearly identifies these deceased gods as those who have once lived “in the places of Horus and in the places of Seth”, an unmistakable reference to Upper and Lower Egypt, respectively.

PT 478

<i>dī swt dī-t(w) n N m3k.t ntr dī-t(w) n</i>	Let also the ladder of the god be given to
<i>N m3k.t stš</i>	N, let the ladder of Seth be given to N
<i>pr N hr-s r p.t stp-f r r'</i>	that N may ascend to the sky on it and
	protect Ra
<i>ii ntr is n šm.w n k3-sn</i>	like ... ⁹⁸ the god(s) who have gone to
	their kas ⁹⁹ .

⁹⁵ Junker, 1910, p. 69, §§ 43-48.

⁹⁶ Cf. LGG VI, p. 269.

⁹⁷ Mercer, 1952b, p. 291, 426, 484; Mercer, 1952c, p. 575.

⁹⁸ The meaning of *ii* at the beginning of the line is problematic as well as the singular *ntr*. Faulkner translates “divine guardian(?)” (1969, p. 166), whereas Mercer intends it as a particle of emphasis, such as “just” or “truly” (1952b, p. 496).

⁹⁹ Transcription based on Sethe, 1910, p. 46, §§ 975a-c.

PT 475

šm stp s3-f ir r´
m s.t ntr.w sb.w n k3.w-sn
nh.w m i3.wt hr nh.w m i3.wt stš¹⁰⁰

N goes that he may protect Ra
in the place of the gods who have gone to their
kas,
who lived in the places of Horus, who lived in
the places of Seth.

PT 359

iw ir N ir h pf hr n nb.w k3.w
dw3.w r´ im m i3.wt hr m i3.wt stš
ntr-sn i3m.w n k3.w-sn¹⁰¹

N is on the way to that far palace of the lords
of kas,
where Re appears early in the places of Horus
and in the places of Seth
as the god of those who are gone to their kas.

PT 450

b.w-k b.w-ntr.w
nb.w hr.t šm.w hr k3.w-sn¹⁰²

Your purity is the purity of the gods,
the lords of offerings who have gone to their
kas.

PT 512

ir-k mn.w-k m sh.t-htp m-m ntr.w šm.w
n k3.w-sn¹⁰³

You make your monuments in the Field of
Offering, among the gods who have gone to
their kas.

Similarly, it has been proposed that the gods listed in PT 25, PT 447, PT 450, PT 568, and in their later versions, could actually represent former kings, who had died and had consequently been deified. Nonetheless, in this last case, neither the choice nor the order the gods were listed in are enough¹⁰⁴.

As it can be easily noted, the expression employing the preposition *hr* occurs much more than that with *hn´*. The difference in the preposition employed inspires a further reflection. On one hand, the use of *hr*, together with the fact that the ka is never

¹⁰⁰ Transcription based on Sethe, 1910, p. 28-29, §§ §948a-c.

¹⁰¹ Transcription based on Sethe, 1908, p. 319-320, §§ §598a-c.

¹⁰² Transcription based on Sethe, 1908, p. 466, §§ §836d-e.

¹⁰³ Transcription based on Sethe, 1910, p. 89, §1165b.

¹⁰⁴ Junker, 1942, p. 68-69.

mentioned in connection with the earthly rule of the gods, seems to suggest that deities acquired their kas only after departing life. On the other hand, the preposition *hn* demonstrates the very opposite and we can assume that also gods, like human beings and the king, possessed their kas while living¹⁰⁵.

The use of typical euphemisms to describe death such as “to go to one’s ka” and “to go with one’s ka” practically puts the pharaoh, considered also to be a god while alive, and the other deities on the same level. The same expression was also used in that same period in tombs of private people, outside of the *Pyramid Texts*, up to the New Kingdom, using the very same allusive tone. This implies that the reticence found in the above quoted spells is not depending on the fact that the texts deal with divine and kingly death, but to the fact that death in general is concerned. The expression “to go to/with¹⁰⁶ one’s ka” is in fact a well-known euphemism for “to die” and parallels similar expressions as “to go to one’s ba” and “to go to one’s akh”. In regard to the former, it is never employed in connection with gods but occurs just once in PT 223, referring to the deceased king, addressed as Osiris¹⁰⁷.

As for gods, as we have seen, only the expression “to go to one’s ka” is used and it is thus safe to assume that divine beings, as well as earthly beings, had kas to. Nevertheless, since deities and kings were both considered to be divine, and thus much alike in their nature, we can suppose that gods too, when dying, were considered to go to their bas. Anyway, this terminology never occurs to describe the gods’ death and their ascension¹⁰⁸, as in the case of the king in PT 223. Its only occurrence is to be found later in time in the second division of the *Amduat* referring to the underworld journey of the sun god, praised as “he who goes to his ba” (*sb n b3-f*)¹⁰⁹.

Similarly, also the phrase “to go to one’s akh” appears only in connection with the deceased king, as demonstrated by the fact that he is explicitly mentioned by name in the following paragraph of PT 305¹¹⁰.

¹⁰⁵ Zabkar, 1968, p. 7-8.

¹⁰⁶ Whereas the preposition *hn* only occurs once in the *Pyramid Texts*, yet it will still be popular during the Middle and New Kingdoms. Cf. Erman, p. 43.

¹⁰⁷ §215b: *ūt n b3-k wsir b3 im b3.w šhm im s.wt-f*

“You have gone to your ba, Osiris, a ba among the bas, mighty in his places”.

Faulkner (1969, p. 52, note 3) intends *ūt* as hortative old perfective and translates “come to your soul, O Osiris”.

¹⁰⁸ Zabkar, 1968, p. 7-8.

¹⁰⁹ Hornung, 1963, p. 39. See p. 144-145.

¹¹⁰ The concerned passage is §§472a-d (Sethe, 1908, p. 243):

dd md.w tsm m3q.t in r' hft wsir
tsm m3q.t in r' hft it-f wsir

The celestial destiny that awaits the deceased king after his passing away is well-known from the *Pyramid Texts*¹¹¹. A typical expression used to describe his ascension to the sky is thus *pri m p.t*, recurring in the *Pyramid Texts*, *Coffin Texts* and also in the *Book of the Dead*¹¹². In PT 519, on the contrary, it is used in connection with the gods, recalling the moment they took up their residence in the sky. In this case ascension by death is not implied.

PT 519

<i>di-k n N db3.w-k ipw(y)</i>	Give these both fingers to N,
<i>rd.w n-k n nfr.t z3.t ntr ʿ3</i>	given by you to the beautiful one, daughter
	of the great god
<i>m wp.t(i) p.t ir t3 m pr.t r-f¹¹³ ntr.w ir p.t¹¹⁴</i>	when the sky was divided from the earth at
	the going up of the gods.

Anyway, as we have seen, the idea that death affected gods too, apart from those strictly connected with renewal and resurrection as Osiris and Ra, was already part of the religious beliefs when the *Pyramid Texts* were composed. Such very allusive terms were employed not only for deceased kings but also for common people. Consequently, they were not the only ones to refer to gods' decease.

To conclude this first part, none of the spells quoted above explains how those gods die or why. Was their death “natural” or was it violent? The texts never suggest that they were killed and even while mentioning Osiris no description of his dismemberment – or alternatively of his drowning – is made. Thus, following a process of elimination, the only possibility left would be that in a way their time was considered

m šm-f n 3h-f

wʿ-sn m pn gs wʿ-sn m pn gs iw N im.wt(i)-sn

“Words to say: the ladder has been tied by Ra in front of Osiris.

The ladder has been tied by Horus in front of his father Osiris

when he goes to his akh.

One of them is on this side, one of them in on that side, while N is between them”.

¹¹¹ For example, PT 302 well illustrates this idea. In §§459a-b (Sethe, 1908, p. 236) we read:

dh r-sn rmt p3y r-sn ntr.w

sp-n-spd.t N r p.t m-ʿ b sn.w-f ntr.w

“People hide (i.e. bury) themselves (whereas) the gods fly up.

Sothis has caused N to fly to the sky in the company of his brothers the gods”.

From the context, it is clear that the gods of the text are the deceased kings, in a perfect contrast, recurrent in this kind of literature, between pharaohs – considered to be divine – who could ascend to heaven, and people buried on earth.

¹¹² Zabkar, 1968, p. 7 note 13.

¹¹³ A mistake for *r-s*.

¹¹⁴ Transcription based on Sethe, 1908, p. 177-178.

to have expired and, like the pharaoh, they have to leave their earthly existence for an eternal one. Whether gods actually needed die in order to achieve the eternal life is a thorny question. In PT 213 we are indeed told that the deceased king has departed his life as a living person¹¹⁵. This is of course a rejection of the idea that the king could possibly cease to exist (“second death”).

Anyway, the general idea that derives from the spells analyzed above is that of a death which at least is not to be classified as violent. A very interesting example in this sense is offered by another group of spells from the *Pyramid Texts*, the so called *Cannibal Hymn*.

2.6. Death by violence

Among the possibilities of death caused by violence, the one by ingestion appears as very a widespread one. It comprises, among other means, physical swallowing of gods in order to absorb their magical powers. In other instances, more in general, deities are said to live on other gods, possibly implying the fact that they have been consumed. Nevertheless, to harm and kill a god a weapon is apparently needed. Alternatively, fire proves to be a very destructive means if used against divine beings.

2.6.1. Feasting on gods

The idea of feasting and living on gods seems to be as old as the notion of divine death. In fact, the first account ever of divine death in ancient Egyptian literature could possibly be the one concerning the primeval gods of spells 273-274 of the *Pyramid Texts*. These two incantations, known together also as *Cannibal Hymn*¹¹⁶ and part of a larger group of related texts, are engraved in the two oldest inscribed pyramids only, those of Unas and Teti. The two versions are almost identical; nevertheless Teti’s presents fuller spellings, better marking plurals, indirect objects and determinatives even though its text has been erroneously split into two utterances. Their collocation on the eastern wall of the antechamber – the first spell on the tympanum in the case of

¹¹⁵ §134a: *h3 N nn šm-n-k is m(w)t.ti šm-n-k nḥ.t(i)*

“Oh, N you have not departed life being dead, you departed being alive.”

¹¹⁶ The text has been called *hymn* because of its structure, the oldest one in poetry, defined as “*parallelismus membrorum*” (parallelism of members). Other similar examples from the *Pyramid Texts* are spells PT 221, PT 222, PT 266, and PT 269 (Mercer, 1952b, p. 191).

Unas – finds its proper collocation in the *Pyramid Texts* organizational structure, in particular among incantations for the spirit's rebirth, its transfiguration in akh, and its emerging from the tomb. According to the conception that looks at the pyramid as a microcosm, thus equating the burial chamber with the Duat itself, the antechamber represents then the Akhet¹¹⁷. It is in this location, whose name means precisely “place of becoming effective”, that the deceased's spirits, after waking up, turns into akh. The ancient Egyptian interpretation of the world considered this place to be the last region of the Duat, the one that finds its collocation up to the eastern horizon. Texts located in the antechamber were intended consequently for the deceased pharaoh first, whereas those of the tympanum and of the eastern wall concern especially the control over provisioning and hostile forces, as well as the Morning Ritual in the case of Teti. Incantation 273-274 denotes therefore a very peculiar example among the other spells of such a group. Moreover, in Unas's pyramid they are found just above those spells, which would help his spirit ascend to the sky¹¹⁸.

The composition has been studied by various scholars, focusing both on its “poetical” structure and content, attracted by its unique and vivid brutality. Yet, they have almost neglected the deeper meaning under this example of divine death and have totally refused to consider it in a wider context of dying gods. The two spells are made up by little utterances, probably intended to be recited by a lector priest¹¹⁹. In the opening, the deceased king's arrival in heaven is described and is then followed by the massacre of the elder gods. Thanks to this, the pharaoh will reign eternally over the gods as a king even mightier than them. The vividness and harshness of the narration is striking.

PT 273-274

393a	<i>gp p.t ihy sb3.w</i>	The sky is overcast, the stars darken,
393b	<i>nmnm pd.wt sd3 ks.w 3kr.w</i>	The sky ¹²⁰ quivers, the bones of Aker ¹²¹ tremble
393c	<i>gr (i)r-sn gnm.w</i>	the movements stop ¹²²

¹¹⁷ Allen, 2005, p. 9-11.

¹¹⁸ Allen, 2006, p. 16.

¹¹⁹ Mercer, 1952b, p. 182.

¹²⁰ “The bow” as a district of the sky (Wb 1, 569.18). The term has not the sky determinative.

¹²¹ The Earth god.

¹²² Extraordinary cosmic phenomena occur when important events in connection with the king's life take place. For instance, in the so called “stela of the marriage” of Ramses II the text reads that “the sky has quivered (*ktkt*) and the earth has trembled (*nmnm*) when he took possession of the regality of Ra” (Kuentz, 1925, p. 192 and 227). On this see Posener, 1922, p. 55-56.

394a	<i>m3-n-sn wnīs ḥ' b3</i>	(because) they have seen Unas shining (as) ba
394b	<i>m ntr 'nh m it.w-f wšb m mw.wt-f</i>	in quality of god, who lives on his fathers and feeds on his mothers.
394c	<i>wnīs ip nb s3bw.t ḥmn mw.t-f rn-f</i>	Unas is the lord of Wisdom ¹²³ , whose mother does not know his name.
395a	<i>iw šps.w wnīs m p.t iw wsr-f m 3ḥ.t</i>	The glory of Unas is in the sky, his strength in on the horizon
395b	<i>mī tm it-f ms sw iw ms-n-f sw wsr sw r-f</i>	as Atum, his father, who created him. He has created him more powerful than himself.
396a	<i>iw k3.w wnīs ḥ3-f iw ḥmws.t-f ḥr rd.wy-f</i>	The kas of Unas are behind him, his ḥms.wt ¹²⁴ are under his feet,
396b	<i>iw ntr.w-f tp-f iw i'r.wt m wp.t-f</i>	his gods ¹²⁵ are upon him, the uraei are on his brow,
396c	<i>iw sšm.wt wnīs m ḥ3.t-f ptr.t b3 3ḥt nṯb-s</i>	the Guide ¹²⁶ of Unas in on his forehead, she who beholds the ba ¹²⁷ , efficient for burning(?) ¹²⁸ .
396d	<i>iw wsr.wt wnīs ḥr mk.t-f</i>	The powers of Unas are for his protection ¹²⁹ .
397a	<i>wnīs pī k3 p.t nhd m ib-f 'nh m ḥpr n ntr nb</i>	Unas is the bull of the sky, who is furious in his heart, who lives in the form of every god,
397b	<i>wnm wsm.w-sn iw.w mḥ ḥ.t-sn m ḥk3.w</i>	who eats the entrails of those who have come (with) their bodies full of magic in the Island of Fire ¹³⁰ .
397c	<i>m iw n sīsī</i>	Unas is equipped. He united with his bas.
398a	<i>wnīs ip 'pr i' b b3.w-f</i>	Unas appears in glory as the Great One, lord of the functionaries ¹³¹ .
398b	<i>iw wnīs ḥ3 m wr pw nb imī.w-s.t-'</i>	He sits with his back toward Geb.
398c	<i>ḥms-f s3-f ir gb</i>	Unas is he who judges together with “he whose name is hidden”.
398d	<i>wnīs pī wd' mdw-f ḥn' imn rn-f</i>	It is the day of slaughtering ¹³² the elders.
399b	<i>r' pw n rḥs sms.w</i>	Unas is the lord of offerings, he who ties the rope,
399c	<i>wnīs p(w) nb ḥtp.t tm 'k3</i>	

¹²³ *s3bw.t* is a term employed in the *Pyramid Texts* with reference to the deceased king (Wb 3, 422.3).

¹²⁴ *ḥmws.t* is the female counterpart of the ka. The *k3.w* as personifications of good qualities corresponds to female beings (Wb 3, 95.7).

¹²⁵ Likely referring to the sacred insignia worn on by the king, as the preposition *tp* seems to suggest, rather than to protective deities hovering over the king as Sethe proposed, since in this instance the preposition *hr* would have been expected. Cf. Faulkner, 1969, p. 83.

¹²⁶ “Guide” as a proper name of the uraeus-serpent (Wb 4, 289.5).

¹²⁷ Probably the ba of a king's enemy.

¹²⁸ This passage is problematic.

¹²⁹ Alternatively to be intended more literally: “the King's neck is on his trunk” (Faulkner, 1969, p. 80).

¹³⁰ The mention of the Island of Fire indicates influence by the teaching of Hermopolis, politically recalling Upper Egypt, despite the fact that the king is said to reign over both Upper and Lower Egypt (Mercer, 1952b, p. 182).

¹³¹ A title (“helper”, “functionary”) and properly the name of a piece of jewelry (Wb 1, 75.12; 157.4). For references see Jones, 2000, p. 299, n. 1093.

¹³² The term *rḥs* is used with regard to livestock's butchery (Wb 2, 448.6; Zandee, 1960, p. 149). In Teti's version Sethe fills the little gap with the determinative of cattle (Cf. Sethe, p. 208.399.b).

399d	<i>ir 3w.t-f ds-f</i>	he who prepares his offerings himself.
400a	<i>wnis pw wnm rmt 'nh m ntr.w</i>	Unas is he who eats people and lives on gods,
400b	<i>nb in.w h3 'wp(w).tiw</i>	lord of messengers, who dispatches tasks.
401a	<i>in ihm 'wp.wt-im(y)-kh3.w sph sn n wnīs</i>	It is the “grasper” ¹³³ of top-knots ¹³⁴ , who is in the cauldron”, who lassoes them for Unas.
401b	<i>in dsr tp sz3-n-f sn hsf-n-s sn</i>	It is the serpent with raised head who guards them for him and who repels them.
401c	<i>in hr-tr.wt k3s n-f sn</i>	It is “he who is on the red” ¹³⁵ who binds them for him.
402a	<i>in hnsu mds nb.w d3d-f sn n Wnis</i>	It is Khensu who slays the lords and who cuts their throats for Unas;
402b	<i>sd(i)-f n-f im.t h.t-sn</i>	he takes out what is in their bodies;
402c	<i>wp(w).ti pw h3b.w-f r hsf</i>	he is the messenger which he sends to repel them.
403a	<i>in šsm.w rhs-f sn n wnīs</i>	It is Shesemu who slaughters them for Unas;
403b	<i>fss n-f ih.t im-sn m kti.t-f mšrw.t</i>	he cooks a meal ¹³⁶ with them on the hearth stones of the evening meal.
403c	<i>wnis pi wnm hk3-sn i'm b3.w-sn</i>	Unas is he who eats their magic and absorb/devours their bas.
404a	<i>iw wr.w-sn n išt-f dw3.t</i>	The big ones are for his morning meal,
404b	<i>iw hr(i).w-ib.w-sn n mšrw.t-f</i>	the middle-seized ones are for his evening meal,
404c	<i>iw šrr.w-sn n išt-f h3w</i>	the small ones are for his night meal.
404d	<i>iw i3.w-sn i3.wt-sn n k3p.t-f</i>	The old men and the old women among them are for his incense burning.
405a	<i>in '3 mh.tiw p.t wd.w n-f sd.t</i>	It is the Great Ones ¹³⁷ in the northern side on heaven who prepare the fire for him
405b	<i>r wh3.wt hr.t-sn m hpš.w n.w sms-sn</i>	on the cauldrons with the legs ¹³⁸ of their elders (as fuel) ¹³⁹ .
406a	<i>iw phr imi.w p.t n wnīs</i>	Those who are in the sky circulate for Unas.
406b	<i>šsr.t n-f kti.wt m rd.w n.w hm.wt-sn</i>	Hearth stones are wiped over for him with the legs of their women.
406c	<i>iw dbn-n-f p.ty tm.ti iw phr-n-f idb.wy</i>	He has completely encircled the two skies ¹⁴⁰ , he has turned around the two

¹³³ The inaccurate determinative in Teti's version is likely a hand. Cf. Wb 3, 281.14-282.4.

¹³⁴ The term has the determinative of hair in Unas's version. The image is that of someone grasping his enemies by their hair.

¹³⁵ The red is in all probability the blood of the victims.

¹³⁶ Literally “an offering”.

¹³⁷ Teti has '3.tiw, probably a corruption. However, the allusion here is to the circumpolar stars.

¹³⁸ hpš.w could mean precisely “leg of a god” (Wb 3, 268.8) but denotes also the characteristic offering limb (Eyre, 2002, p. 121).

¹³⁹ The sentence can be understood in two different ways. The first considering the legs being contained in the cauldron (cf. Faulkner, 1924, p.98; Foster, 1978, p. 61; Allen, 2005, p. 51, who translates hpš.w “bones”); the second regarding the legs as the fuel for the fire (cf. Mercer, 1952a, p. 94; Altenmüller, 1977, p. 21; Foster, 1995, p. 17; Eyre, 2002, p. 9). According to the first interpretation the sentence could have been translated: “to the cauldrons in which they are with the thighs of the oldest among them”. Personally I'd rather choose for the second possibility, which, in my opinion, better fits in the context.

407a	<i>wnīs pī šhm-wr šhm m šhm.w</i>	banks ¹⁴¹ . Unas is the great one who is powerful among the powerful ones.
407b	<i>wnīs pī šm šm šm.w wr</i>	Unas is the mighty one who is mighty among the great mighty ones.
407c	<i>gmy-f m w3.t-f</i>	Whom he finds on his way he eats him piecemeal/raw.
407d	<i>iw mk.t wnīs m h3.t s h.w nb.w imi.w 3h.t</i>	The proper place of Unas is in front of all the nobles who are on the horizon.
408a	<i>wnīs pī ntr sms r sms.w</i>	Unas is a god older than the elders.
408b	<i>iw phr n-f h3.w iw wdn n-f šnt.w</i>	Thousand surround him, hundreds make offerings to him.
408c	<i>iw rdi n-f m šhm-wr in szhit ntr.w</i>	The legitimacy as the Great Power is given to him by Orion ¹⁴² , father of the gods.
409a	<i>iw whm-n-wnīs h.w m p.t i(w)-f sbn m nb h.t</i>	Unas has risen again in the sky, he is crowned as lord of the horizon.
409b	<i>iw hsb-n-f t3s.w bks.w</i>	He breaks ¹⁴³ the vertebrae of the spines,
409c	<i>iw (i)t-n-f h3.tiw ntr.w</i>	he has taken the hearts ¹⁴⁴ of the gods,
410a	<i>iw wnm-n-f dšr.t iw m-n-f w3d.t</i>	he has eaten the red (crown) ¹⁴⁵ he has swallowed the green (crown) ¹⁴⁶ .
410b	<i>wšb wnīs m sm3.w s33.w</i>	Unas feeds on the lungs of the wise ones ¹⁴⁷ .
410c	<i>htp-f m nh m h3.tiw hk3.w-sn ist</i>	He is content with living on hearts and on their magic.
411a	<i>fīw wnīs nsb-f sbš.w im.w dšr.t</i>	Unas is disgusted when he licks ¹⁴⁸ the sbš.w ¹⁴⁹ of the red crown.
411b	<i>i(w)-f w3h-f iw hk3-sn m h.t-f</i>	He rejoices when their magic is in his belly.
411c	<i>n nhmm s h.w wnīs m- f</i>	His dignity shall not be taken away from him
411d	<i>iw m-n-f si3 n ntr nb</i>	since he has absorbed the knowledge ¹⁵⁰ of every god.

¹⁴⁰ The Upper World and the Netherworld.

¹⁴¹ Egypt

¹⁴² *szh* traditionally denotes Osiris, but not in this instance, in which the term stresses the magnificence of Unas and Teti (Mercer, 1952b, p. 189).

¹⁴³ Despite the determinative, *hsb* is to be translated “to break”, better fitting the context, and not “to reckon”.

¹⁴⁴ For the difference between *ib* and *h3.ti* see p. 18-19 as well as p. 55, note 169.

¹⁴⁵ The determinative of crown only occurs in Teti and just when referring to the red crown (*dšr.t*) both in §410.a and §411.a. The green crown (*w3d.t*) has no determinative, neither in Unas’s version nor in Teti’s. Otherwise, *dšr.t* could mean “blood”, being such term the later version – attested from the *Book of the Dead* on – of *dšr.w* (Wb 5, 492.1-2). Similarly, *w3d.t* is employed from the Middle Kingdom on with the meaning “raw flesh” (Wb 1, 268.4-6). However, in this context, for chronological reasons, the two terms can mean only “red crown” and “green crown”, respectively.

¹⁴⁶ A reference to the conquest of Lower Egypt.

¹⁴⁷ Sethe intended the lungs as the seat of wisdom, translating “den Lungen, die weise sind” (1936, p. 168), but cites no evidence to support this interpretation.

¹⁴⁸ For the difference between swallowing and licking, the latter attributed a hostile connotation, see Ritner, 1993, p. 92-110, and as for the *sbš.w* of the red crown in particular p. 96-97.

¹⁴⁹ The meaning of this term is not clear.

¹⁵⁰ In Teti’s version the word has indeed the divine determinative.

412a	<i>h'w pi n wnīs nhḥ ḏr(w)-f pi ḏ.t</i>	The lifetime of Unas is eternity, his limit is eternity
412b	<i>m s h-f pn n mrr-f irr-f msḏḏ-f nn ir-n-f</i>	in this his rank of “what he wants he does, what he wants not he does not ¹⁵¹ ”,
412c	<i>imi ḏr.w 3ḥ.t ḏ.t r nhḥ</i>	who is within the boundary for ever and ever.
413a	<i>(i)sk b3-sn n m ḥ.t wnīs b3.w-sn ḥr wnīs</i>	Their bas are in Unas’s body, their bas are with Unas.
413b	<i>m ḥ3(.w)-f ḥ.t r nṯr.w ḳrr.t n-wnīs m ḳs.w-sn</i>	His surplus of food is more than (that of) the gods, it is cooked ¹⁵² for Unas from their bones.
413c	<i>(i)sk b3-sn ḥr wnīs sw.wt-sn m-‘ ir(y)w-sn</i>	Lo, their bas are with Unas their shadows are taken away from those whom they belong to ¹⁵³ .
414a	<i>iw wnīs m nn ḥ‘ ḥ‘ imn imn</i>	Unas is in this which shines which shines, which hides, which hides.
414b	<i>nn šḥm ir.w ir.wt m ḥbs</i>	The doers of evil ¹⁵⁴ have no power to destroy ¹⁵⁵
414c	<i>s.t-ib wnīs m ‘nh.w m t3 pn ḏ.t r nhḥ¹⁵⁶</i>	the favorite place of Unas among the living on this earth for ever and ever.

In regard to what emerges from the text, gods could be reserved a cruel destiny too. The two spells together describe the ritual massacre of primeval gods endowed with great powers (*ḥk3*). It is necessary to allow Unas and Teti to physically absorb *ḥk3* by feasting on the gods’ bodies, full of magic according to their status as primeval deities from the Isle of Flame. The central subject of the incantation is the pharaoh, as always throughout the *Pyramid Texts*, and above all his rebirth and transfiguration into a god. According to the central idea of the hymn, this can only be achieved by slaughtering and swallowing gods.

¹⁵¹ On the structure of the phrase see Gardiner, 1947, p. 99.

¹⁵² *ḳrr* could also be translated with “to stoke up” instead of “to cook” (Eyre, 2002, p. 135).

¹⁵³ Two main different translations of the second half of §413c are possible with opposite meaning, according to the term *m-‘*, signifying both “in the hand of, together with” (Wb 1, 156.9-12) and “(to be taken) from” (Wb 2, 45.14 and Wb 2, 46.1). Faulkner and Allen tend toward the first option, proposing a sort of “positive” connotation, translating: “their shadows are with their companions” (Faulkner, 1924, p. 99) and “(only) their shadows are (still) with their owners” (Allen, 2005, p. 52). On the other hand, other Egyptologists prefer to intend *m-‘* in the sense of “taking away”, as in “their shadows are taken away from the hand of those to whom they belong” (Mercer, 1952a, p. 95); “their shades are (removed) from their owners” (Faulkner, 1969, p. 83); “their shadows (are taken) from their owners” (Lichtheim, 1973, p. 38); “ihre Schatten sind fort von denen, die dazugehören” (Altenmüller, 1977, p. 22); “their Shades are gone from their forms” (Foster, 1995, p. 18). “Their shadows are (removed) from (?) their owners” (Eyre, 2002, p. 10). Personally, according to the general meaning of the text and also in regard to the probable destruction of the god’s bodies, I agree with the second interpretation.

¹⁵⁴ *ir.w* is a term used to denote enemies (Wb 1, 113.3).

¹⁵⁵ Literally “to hack up (the earth)”.

¹⁵⁶ The version of the spell quoted is Unas’s. The transcription is based on Sethe, 1908, p. 207-216.

As for the cannibalistic episode itself, it has raised many problems among scholars. Since no evidence of such a practice had never existed at the time of the V and VI Dynasties, the only possibility left is that cannibalism – if ever performed – must have been a more antique custom, long gone by the time of Unas and Teti, but still rooted in the cultural memory of the ancient Egyptians up to the time in which the *Pyramid Texts* were composed. The succeeding kings of the VI Dynasty had then definitively abandoned its remembrance too, perhaps because, in a context of emergence of the solar cults, a similar consideration of life after death was viewed as too primitive and brutal¹⁵⁷. Anyway, the situation here is more delicate and complicated, since in this case we are dealing with gods, not with common humans and least of all with retainer sacrifices. Nevertheless, if the interpretation above were true, the text would prove to be much older than the reigns of Unas and Teti. This is suggested by the fact that the only great divinities mentioned are Atum, Geb and Orion – the latter consistently losing importance over time in ancient Egyptian religion – as well as by the total absence of references both to the sun cult and Osiris, equally acquiring great importance at the end of the Old Kingdom¹⁵⁸. The equation between the deceased and the god Osiris is also completely lacking. All of these reasons would possibly make the text the oldest report of a potential divine death ever recorded in ancient Egyptian literature.

But what makes this report even more impressive and unique in its kind is definitely the richness in details and the extreme vividness, resulting in a perfect description of a mass condemn to death of gods. As a matter of fact, such a cruel descriptive precision will be only employed later on, while dealing with the tortures inflicted in the Underworld to the enemies of Ra and Osiris¹⁵⁹.

The narration of utterance PT 273-274 deals in particular with the ritual meal of Unas and Teti, who are addressed as those who eat people and live on gods (*wnis/tti pw wnm rmt' nh m ntr.w*). The feast takes place after the king's physical departure from the world of the living¹⁶⁰, on the day of slaughtering the elders (*r' hrw pw n rhs sms.w*), when other divine entities prepare the offerings. The victims, with no distinction of size, age or gender, guarded by the serpent with the raised head, are firstly lassoed (*sph*) and

¹⁵⁷ Faulkner, 1924, p. 102-103.

¹⁵⁸ Mercer, 1952b, p. 182.

¹⁵⁹ For cooking as a form of torture see Zandee, 1960, p. 142-146.

¹⁶⁰ Throughout the *Pyramid Texts*, but also throughout the entire funerary literature, the idea that the king is actually dead is completely rejected. The same will happen with commoners from the time of the *Coffin Texts*.

tied up (*k3s*) by the “grasper of top-knots who is in the cauldron”. Khensu then injures them by cruelly cutting their throats (*d3d*) and removes (*sd*) their innards (*im.t h.t-sn*). The narration of the massacre continues with Shesemu, the god of oil- and wine-press, who slaughters (*rhs*) and cooks (*fss*) them on the fireplace. Then it culminates with the king eating (*wnm*) their physical body and absorbing the magic (*hk3*) and knowledge (*si3*) that fills their bodies.

Next to the “grasper of top-knots who is in the cauldron”, Khensu and Shesemu, who physically wound and butcher the victims, the pharaoh too takes part in the slaughtering. Precisely, he is not simply eating them passively¹⁶¹, but butchers them on his own, as the text shows. It is written that he himself prepares his meal (*ir 3w.t-f ds-f*, §399d), that he breaks their vertebrae (*iw hsb-n-f t3s.w bks.w*, §409b) and removes their hearts (*iw it-n-f h3.tiw ntr.w*, §409c). Such a cruelty in devouring the gods is not limited to the context of the ritual offering but rather applies to whoever opposes the pharaoh, who will consequently eat raw or bit by bit him whom is found on his way (*gmy-f m w3.t-f wnm-n n-f sw mwmw*, §407c).

The vividness of the account shows that there is definitely no reticence in depicting so explicitly neither the massacre nor the feasting. This is surprising, but it is even more astonishing if we compare the description of the killing with later funerary texts. We will find indeed that it corresponds precisely to the horrible tortures inflicted by evil demons in Duat. Such a terrible and feared destiny is exactly what awaits the enemies of Ra and Osiris, which are treated like slaughtering cattle¹⁶². The terminology of PT 273-274 recalls indeed the context of slaughtering. To be precise, the terms employed from §401a to §403a (*sph* “to lasso”, *hsf* “to repel”, *k3s* “to bind (a victim)”, *šdi* “to remove, cut out”, *rhs* “slaughter”¹⁶³) denote the actions performed to catch and butcher livestock, as demonstrated by figurative scenes of the king in Old Kingdom’s mastabas¹⁶⁴. Also the acting of knotting the cord by Unas and Teti in §399 would be a further allusion to the ceremonial lassoing of sacrificial animals¹⁶⁵. The passage of the dismemberment of the primeval gods faithfully respects the slaughtering scenes of the

¹⁶¹ Cf. [§397b] *wnm wsm.w-sn*; [§400a] *wnis pw wnm rmt*; [§410b] *wšb wnīs m sm3.w s33.w*.

¹⁶² Zandee, 1960, p. 147.

¹⁶³ The only verbs which do not have a parallel with mastabas’ inscriptions are *s3* “ward off” e *d3d* “to cut the throat”. Anyway, even though the latter is not attested in the context of slaughtering scenes, the action that it describes is well-known. As a matter of facts, as pictorial sources demonstrate, at the beginning of the slaughtering process, immediately after immobilizing the cattle, the butcher used to cut the arteries of the neck as deep as to reach the bones (Eyre, 2002, p. 92).

¹⁶⁴ Shamakov, 2012, pp. 138-139.

¹⁶⁵ Faulkner, 1924, p. 99.

pictorial sources, in which decapitation, followed by the removal of the heart and innards, is then related to the cutting of the forelegs¹⁶⁶. Those are mentioned in the spell too, explaining how the limbs (*rd.w*) of their women are used to build or clean¹⁶⁷ (*šsr*) the fireplace. In any case, in the incantation Khemsu and Shesemu perform the very same actions executed by butchers in slaughterhouses, setting the entire episode in the context of the offering ritual in order to prepare three meals for the deceased king. The fact that they cook three dishes instead of the canonical two transfers the entire event on a divine level¹⁶⁸, pervading the episode with even more magic and ritual meaning.

Sliding back from slaughtering to feasting, among body parts devoured by the pharaoh we can also find what is definitely the most important one, namely the heart (*h3.ti*¹⁶⁹), the organ of intellect. It is fundamental for Unas and Teti in order to absorb the god's knowledge and to live on their magic (*htp-f m 'nh m h3.tiw hk3.w-sn ist*, §410c).

As for the term '*m*', "to devour" or "to swallow", the practice of swallowing as a medium to absorb powers¹⁷⁰ is well known in the context of ancient Egyptian magical practice¹⁷¹. As a matter of fact, according to such beliefs, consuming an object led to the acquisition of its characteristics and benefits.

Examples of this concept are numerous throughout the *Pyramid Texts*, but the *Cannibal Hymn* is undoubtedly the clearest of all. Other spells, moreover, associate food offerings with divinities' body parts as, for instance, the teeth of Horus or his eye, or alternatively, to other divine elements such as the effluxes of Osiris or the milk of Isis. These elements were supposed to transfer to the king their divine qualities just by

¹⁶⁶ Eyre, 2002, pp. 90-93.

¹⁶⁷ Faulkner considers *šsr* a metathesis of *sšr*, in its turn a variant of *šhr* "to sweep out, to clean out" (Faulkner 1924, p. 99).

¹⁶⁸ The *Pyramid Texts* themselves read: "For to N, indeed belong the five portions of bread, liquid, cake, in the mansion, of which three are in heaven with Ra, and two on earth with the Ennead" (PT 205, §§121c-121d); "To say: N is the bull of the Ennead, lord of the five meals, three in heaven, two on earth" (PT 409, §§717a-717b).

¹⁶⁹ As explained in chapter 1, the ancient Egyptian language had two different terms for the word "heart": *h3.ti* and *ib*. Since in PT 273-274 both of them are employed, the reason of the use of the two terms should be looked for in their meaning. The word *ib* is more in connection with emotions felt by a person. This explains perfectly the expression *nhd m ib-f* (literally: "he trembles /he is infuriated in his heart"), referring to Unas's and Teti's emotional sphere. On the other hand, *h3.ti* is likely linked to the concept of individuality that is to be acquired during one's lifetime, which is consequently in contrast with transmitted qualities. Therefore, the use of *h3.ti* in reference to the hearts swallowed by the deceased king (*iw (i)t-n-f h3.tiw ntr.w* in §409c; *htp-f m 'nh m h3.tiw hk3.w-sn ist* in §410c) is no accident and remarks the fact that by eating this organ the king can absorb the god's power, which is indeed a consequence of their existence as supernatural beings.

¹⁷⁰ The verb can also be more strictly intended as "to absorb magical power" (Wb 1, 184.4).

¹⁷¹ On swallowing see Ritner, 1993, p. 102-110.

means of their ingestion¹⁷². The fact that the abilities and power of the gods could be acquired by someone who does not own magic at all is unmistakable. The *Tale of Khamwas and Neferkaptah*¹⁷³ demonstrates it. In utterance PT 273-274 the interpretation of absorbing *ḥk3* by swallowing is also connected with the use of the term *ḥ3.tiw* instead of *ib.w*, suggesting a stronger connection with the magic qualities, individuality and experience, of such primeval divinities.

Scholars agree that the aim of the feasting is the king absorbing the primeval gods' supernatural powers in addition to physical nourishment¹⁷⁴. They have focused on the consequences of this act in regard with the deceased king, who, by absorption of the deities' *bas*, is transfigured into a greater god, but no one has ever gone further. No one has ever analyzed what all of this implies for the gods, which is the very question at the center of this paper. What becomes of them after the ritual consumption? The spell – not surprisingly – does not directly tell us, yet a few different suppositions can be made.

The main is based on both context and religious beliefs: since the preservation of the body – or at least of its replicas as statues, coffins, etc. – is of utmost importance for the survival of a deceased human, we can assume that the same applies to divinities too. Now, since the ritual of the *Cannibal Hymn* implies an actual massacre, as emphasized by the terminology derived from the ritual slaughter of animals, we are easily tempted to imagine their corpse to be completely destroyed. But would this lead to total annihilation (“second death”) even for gods? Do the laws of the human world apply to them too? In this regard – always keeping in mind the importance of the physical integrity of the deceased's body in ancient Egyptian conception of death – the spell surprises us again. Not only are Unas and Teti devouring the inner organs of the primeval gods as a medium to absorb particular qualities, but they are also disposing of

¹⁷² Examples are numerous also outside of the funerary context and occur in later times as well. For the association of swallowing (*m*) and licking (*nsb*), as means to internalize divine forces see Ritner, 1993, p. 92-113.

¹⁷³ This tale, known also as *Setne I*, is recorded on the Cairo Museum Papyrus 30646 and, together with the text on the verso of the British Museum Papyrus 604, tells the story of Khamwas, fourth son of Rameses II and high priest of Ptah at Memphis. The first papyrus, written in demotic, dates back to the Ptolemaic Period, whereas the latter is from the Roman Period and is much less accurate. Prince Khamwas has been a great builder and restorer of sacred building in the Memphite area and during his lifetime was also known to be an eminent sage. After his death, this characteristic made people to think of him as a magician, giving life to these two Demotic tales. *Setne I* revolves around a magic book believed to have been written by the god Thot, the scribe of the gods, himself. After reciting the two spell reported on the book of Thot, Neferkaptah copies the text on a new sheet of papyrus and soaks the duplicate in beer and dissolves it in water. Once it is completely dissolved, he drinks the water and knows all that was written on it (cf. Lichtheim, 1980, p. 125-123). In this case, is worth to point out that “in a semantic recognition of a magical principle”, as Ritner writes (1993, p. 105-106), the verb *m* switched its meaning from “to swallow” to “to know”, supplanting completely the verb *rḥ* by the Coptic Period.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Altenmüller, 1977, p. 30; Faulkner, 1924, p. 102; Foster, 1978, p. 57; Mercer, 1958b, p. 182.

the body parts they do not eat. As reported, deities too tough for eating and probably unfit to transmit their magic to the pharaoh, such as the male and the female old ones, who are burned to set the fire for cooking (*iw i3.w-sn i3.wt-sn n k3p.t-f*, §404d), used as fuel for the hearth. This is what happens in particular with the “great ones in the northern part of heaven¹⁷⁵” who set the fire (*in 3 mh.tiw p.t*¹⁷⁶ *wd.w n-f sd-t*, §405a), which is fueled with the thighs of the oldest ones among them (*r wh3.wt hr.t-sn m hpš.w n.w sms-sn*¹⁷⁷, §405b). Moreover, old male and female divinities are probably used as incense burning offering (*k3p.t*). All of this practices concerning fire inevitably lead to total annihilation, something terribly negative. Suffice to say that, in later time, death by fire will be regarded as a proper punishment for the most dreadful crimes¹⁷⁸.

If the physical support of beings is destroyed, what happens to the non-physical entities? We are going to focus on the *ba* firstly. Back to §413a and §413c we are told that “their *ba* is in Unas’s belly, their *bas* are with Unas” (*sk b3-sn n m h.t wnīs b3.w-sn hr wnīs*) and that “their *ba* is with Unas” (*sk b3-sn hr wnīs*). So far the translation is extremely clear: it is unmistakable that the god’s *bas* have been swallowed by the king. The most important characteristic of this entity is its capability of movement, aimed at its return to the mummified body of the deceased every night in order to rejuvenate him. We can presume that this reason to be has ceased to exist together with the possibility for the *ba* to reunite with the body, both because the physical support has been obliterated and because the *ba* is now unable to move, restrained in the king’s belly. In other words, the body is annihilated and, if we interpret §413a literally, the *bas* have become part of Unas himself. Alternatively, we can also consider an opposite resolution, namely the destruction of the *bas* too. This last interpretation originates from the possible different translation of the verb *m*, “to devour”¹⁷⁹, changing the meaning of the text from “Unas is he who eats their magic and swallows their *bas*” to “Unas is he who eats their magic and devours their *bas*”. The latter version implies the absorption of their *hk3.w*, but also that, as a consequence of consumption, the gods’ *bas* are consumed and thus destroyed. This meaning is well established in the context of total annihilation

¹⁷⁵ It is impossible to determine for sure their identity. Nonetheless, they are likely to be considered as the personified and deified circumpolar stars (Mercer, 1952b, p. 188). This interpretation has been firstly suggested by Sethe because of the stone determinative after *3.tiw* (§405a).

¹⁷⁶ *3.tiw mh.tiw p.t* (§405a) in Teti’s version. The first *nisbe* is followed by the stone determinative, the second by the divine determinative.

¹⁷⁷ For a different translation see p. 50, note 139.

¹⁷⁸ For examples see Leahy, 1984.

¹⁷⁹ Especially with the sense of devouring crowns, *bas* and shadows, and of absorbing magic (Wb 1, 184. 2-4).

resulting in the so called “second death” that can be found especially throughout the later funerary literature dealing with the demons of the Duat. Demons called “Devourer of millions”, “Devourer of the dead”, “Devourer of shadows” and “Devourer of corpses” well illustrate such an idea¹⁸⁰. Their purpose is indeed that of punishing evildoer crushing corpses (*h3.t*), bas and shades (*šw.t*). The very same expression ‘*m b3*’ is also found at the very end of the seventh hour of the *Amduat*, when it is stated that ‘*bš*’ should not devour the ba of whoever knows the spell¹⁸¹.

In regard with the other entities which compose a person, namely ka, name and shadow, only the last one is mentioned in the text (*sw.wt-sn m-‘ir(i)w-sn*, § 413c). At this point an interpretative problem arises, due to translation ambiguities¹⁸². According to the context, this statement is likely to be intended in the sense that also their shades are taken away from their owners, i.e. the gods. Destroying a shadow is also something that entails total annihilation not only for human beings but also for divine ones as demonstrated by the *Book of Overthrowing Apophis*. This text, recorded on a papyrus dating back to the Greco-Roman Period, deals with the felling Apophis, Ra’s archenemy, by physically cutting him to pieces and, among other tortures, by destroying his shadow¹⁸³. Here, a passage reads that “those who are among(?) the watchers guard him, they cut off his soul, his body, his shade, his spirit, and his magic power, they cut his heart from its place; his name is erased and he is fallen and shall not be¹⁸⁴”.

As for the name (*rn*), it is not mentioned in the *Cannibal Hymn* since of course the aim of the incantation is not that of purposefully condemning these beings to suffer “second death”. The obliteration of some of them is more of a “side effect” than the real purpose, as it ideally happens in the case of Apophis and Seth instead.

The above proposed interpretation is essentially a literal one. Yet, another one is also possible considering the ritual nature of the utterance. Besides, most of the verb forms can be intended as prospective and thus translated in English with the future tense. As a consequence, the massacre would actually not be taking place and its execution would be nothing more than a menace addressed to the primordial gods which could hinder the deceased pharaoh’s ascension to the sky. However, the meaning behind such a threat is that it would be practicable and its consequences concrete, even

¹⁸⁰ See Zandee, 1960, p. 158-159.

¹⁸¹ Cf. Hornung, 1963, p. 133.

¹⁸² See p. 52, note 153.

¹⁸³ For the analysis of some significant passages of the text see p. 186-190.

¹⁸⁴ pBremner-Rhind, 27,18; Faulkner, 1933, p. 64. Translation by Faulkner, 1937, p. 173.

though in reality the slaughtering will never be performed, since the menace alone would be sufficient to scare the primordial gods.

As already explained above, PT 273-274 is recorded in the pyramids of Unas and Teti only, the first two pyramids to ever be inscribed, whereas their successors abandoned it completely. However, the composition has been handed down up to the Middle Kingdom in a different version composed at the end of the Old Kingdom or during the First Intermediate Period. This adaptation is documented in multiple copies but the most complete one is that recorded on the inner (Cairo 2218) and outer coffin (Cairo 2219) of the nomarch *msḥti* from Asyut, dated to the IX-X Dynasty. It is referred to as utterance 573 of the *Coffin Texts*. It is also partially transcribed on two coffins of the XII Dynasty in very abridged and incomplete versions: its beginning on the foot of the outer coffin of *s3-ḥd-ḥtp* (Cairo 28086) from el-Barsha and its final part on the back of the perished coffin of *ikr*, originally from Gebelein¹⁸⁵. Compared to PT 273-274, CT 573 presents revisions and addition, still remaining unchanged in its meaning. The main difference between the two spells is that in CT 573 the performer of the slaughter is the deceased, a private person in this case, and not a divine being as the king was considered to be. Nevertheless, the deceased, speaking in the first person, identifies himself with Ra and is thus to be considered a god in his turn, having acquired divine features, by means of this assimilation.

CT 573

dd mdw ir.t ḥpr ...

gp p.t iḥ(y) sb3.w

nmnm pḏ.wt sd3 ks.w 3kr

gr stn gnm.w

m33.w pr k3.k(w)i m ntr pw

nb ḥḥ 'nh m ḥtp.t

'pr n wsir

ink r 's3b w 'm p.t

ḥm-n mw.t-f rn-f

iw wsr-i m 3ḥ.t šps[-i] m 3ḥ.t

mī r 'tm (i)t-i ms.w-i

Words to say to take shape...¹⁸⁶

the sky is overcast, the stars darken,

the sky quivers, the bones of Aker tremble

the wind(?) stops.

They (are those) who see me ascending and exalted as this god,

lord of millions who lives on offerings, whom Osiris has equipped.

I am Ra, the only jackal in the sky,

his mother does not know his name,

my power is on the horizon, my glory is on the horizon

like Ra-Atum, my father, who generated me.

¹⁸⁵ Altenmüller, 1977, p. 22-23.

¹⁸⁶ The second part of the title is completely obliterated. S2C reads instead: *r3 n ḥk[3]* ... "spell for magic..."

iw rdi-n-f b3-f
iw [rdi]-n-f n-i 3h.w-f
*iw hk3.w-i h3 hn.wt-s*¹⁸⁷
hr rd.wy-i
iw ntr.w tp-i i r.t-i m h3.t-i

iw ssm.wt-i m wp.t-i
ptr-n b3-i m 3h.t
nsb-i-s
ink pr 3h.w-f
ink k3 p.t nh m ib-f

nh m hpr.w ntr.w
wšb m h3.wt hk3.w
iw h.wt-sn mh.t m hk3.w m iw ns(r)s

iw phr-n-i imi.w m p.t
iw-i h .k(w)i m ntr pw im-sn
nb n imi.w-s.t-
hms-i r-i s3-i r gb m hnt itr.ty

ink wd m dw-f hn imn-i rn-f

grh pw n rhs sms.w

ink nb rmt nh m ntr.w

ink ir 3w.t-f ds-f
in hm wp.wt hr-ib kh3sn sph n-i hk3.w-sn

in- f k3s n-i sn

hri-tr.(w)t s33 n-i sn

šdd n-i im.t h.t-sn
wp.t-i pw hns w h3b.w hr hsf.w

in šsmw dšr n s3.w sft n-i sn

He gave me his ba,
 he gave me his magic.
 My magic is behind (me), the *hms.wt*
 under my feet,
 the gods are above me, my uraeus is on my
 forehead,
 my Guide is on my brow,
 my ba looked in the flame
 when I lick it.
 I am one who is equipped with his powers
 I am the bull of the sky who escapes(?)¹⁸⁸
 according to his desire,
 who lives on the forms of the gods,
 who eats flesh and magic.
 Their bodies (are) full of magic from the
 Island of Fire.
 I walked around those who are in the sky,
 I have risen as a god among them,
 lord of the functionaries.
 I sit with my back toward Geb, in front of
 the two shrines.
 I am his judge together with “he whose
 name is hidden”.
 It is the night of the slaughtering of the
 Elders.
 I am the lord of people, one who lives on
 gods.
 I am he who himself prepares his meal.
 It is the destroyer of messages¹⁸⁹ in the
 middle *kh3sn*¹⁹⁰ who lassoes their magic for
 me.
 It is “he who brings his arm” who binds
 them for me.
 It is “he who is over the red (i.e. blood?)”
 who watches them for me,
 who takes away what is in their bodies.
 It is my messenger Khonsu who is sent to
 the Repeller.
 It is Shesemu, red of timber(?)¹⁹¹ who
 slaughters them for me

¹⁸⁷ To be read *hmmwst*, the female counterpart of the *kas*. The word has been distorted into *hn.wt-s* (“her mistress”), which is meaningless in this context.

¹⁸⁸ The verb *nh* is used in the *Pyramid Texts* with a time specification as object with the meaning of “to avoid, to escape (the day of death)” (Wb 2, 280.11-12). It actually makes no sense here. S2C has *[n]hm ib-f*, “whose heart rejoices”. Faulkner (1977, p. 176 and 178) reads *k3 p.t nhd m ib-f*, and translates “who conquers(?) at will”.

¹⁸⁹ Barguet translates literally “celui-qui-saisit-par-les-cheveux” (1986, p. 492, note 79).

¹⁹⁰ Barguet interprets the group of words as the name of an entity. He translates: “c’est Akhem-wpet, Hery-ib-keha.sn, qui a pris au lasso pour moi leur pouvoir magique” (1986, p. 492).

¹⁹¹ This epithet is problematic and is not found in the *Pyramid Texts*. The term *s3.w* has the determinative of wood. Faulkner translates: “It is the Winepress, red of timbers” supposing that the pressed-out grape

pfss n-i ḥ.t im sn m ktw.t-f tw mšr.(w)t

wg-t(w) ḥḥ.w 'm-t(w) ḥnmm.t

phr psqn.tiw ḥr-s

*in '3-ib pw mh.t p.t ḥr n-i wh3.wt r-sn ḥr
rd.w n.w ḥm.wt-sn*

didi.t n-i ḥ.t r wh3.wt

*pfss-t(w) n-i ḥ.t im-sn m ḥpš.w n 3ḥ im.w-
sn*

iw wrr.w r iš.t-i n ḥ3w

iw šrr.w r iš.t-i nḥpw

iw ḥr-ib-sn n mšr.(w)t-i

iw i3.wt-sn n ktw.t-i

ink šhm šhm r ntr.w

i(w) dbn-n-i p.ty tm.ty

iw phr-n-i p.t iw phr-n-i t3 idb.wy

iw ḥ'.k(wi) m sh.w im.w 3ḥ.t

gmy-i m w3.t-i wn(m)-i n-i sw mwmw

m3w-i r-tn rmt ntr.w

ḥ'.k(wi) m i3 r i3.w

iw whm-n-i ḥ'.w m p.t

iw-i sbn.k(w)i r-i m dr.w 3ḥ.t

iw wdn n-i¹⁹⁴ ḥḥ m sp3(?)

iw wn(m)-n-i mh3.t ntr.w

ḥsk-n-i i' n.w(?) bkš.w-sn

iw wn-n-i m w3d.t

iw s'm-n-i dšr.t

and who cooks for me a part of them on his evening meal's hearth stones.

The chaos-gods¹⁹² are chewed and the sunfolk¹⁹³ is swallowed.

The new moon goes around under them.

It is the great of heart in the north of the sky who prepares for me the cauldrons with the legs of their women.

The fire is lit for me to the cauldrons.

A portion (i.e. an offering) of them is cooked for me with the thighs of the akh which are among them.

The big ones are for my night meal, the small ones are for my breakfast meal, the middle-seized ones are for my evening meal,

the female old ones are for my hearth stones.

I am the mighty one, mightier than the gods.

I have completely circumnavigated the two sky.

I have turned around the sky, I have turned around the earth and the two rivers.

I have risen among the powerful ones who are in the horizon.

Him whom I find on my path I devour uncooked/piecemeal.

See me, people and gods!

I have risen as one older than the Old Ones,

I have risen again in the sky,

I am crowned at the borders of the horizon.

Millions are scarified for me as centipedes(?)¹⁹⁵

I have eaten of gods' meat,

I have cut baboons(?)¹⁹⁶ and their spines,

I have eaten the green (crown),

I have swallowed the red crown,

juice might be intended (1977, p. 177 and p. 178, note 10). On the contrary, Barguet translates: "C'est Chesmou, au manche de couteau rouge" (1986, p. 492). In this instance, the red would be the blood of his victims covering the knife handle.

¹⁹² The term can alternatively be translated "millions", but, next to the sunfolk (*ḥnmm.t*) the mention of other divine beings seems more appropriate.

¹⁹³ The sunfolk of Heliopolis is a group of gods among whose functions are those of assisting the deceased in his ascent to the sky by building a ramp (PT 505, § 1090c) or ladder for him (PT 306, § 479; PT 474, §941-942; PT 530, §1253a), as well as welcoming him in the hereafter (PT 482, § 1004c-1006; PT 670, §1974c-1975b). Cf. also LGG V, p. 221.

¹⁹⁴ S1C reads the preposition *m* between *n-i* and *ḥḥ*.

¹⁹⁵ Faulkner interprets the last sign a skeleton of a fish and thus translates "men offer to me with myriads of caught fish (?)" (1977, p. 177 and 178). Cf. De Buck, 1956, p. 181 b.

¹⁹⁶ The ideogram is damaged. De Buck recognized a baboon in the back of the animal; cf. 1956, p. 181 d.

iw-i 3h.k(w)i m- 'šb.w dšr.t

nn šhm ir(y)w ir.t-sn m hbs s.t-ib-i m

t3.wy tm.wy

wn(m)-n-i m hk3.w-sn

s 'm-i m 3h.w-sn

iw wsr-i r-sn hr-i

iw 3h.w-sn hnw- 'wy

iw b3-sn hr-i

iw š.wt-sn hr nb-sn

iw hk3.w-sn hnw h.t-i

*in¹⁹⁷ imn(t) wr.t¹⁹⁸ hr-ib.t 'r.t iqr.w h3m
n-i sn*

in šhd pw srr m izb.t nt p.t in n-i

3 'w n izd.wt-sn

s3.t it-i im-sn

ikr rh hsk ds-f sp3(?) pr.t im-s

iwf n-i n i 'w-i n.w r 'pn

iwf n-i hr.wt nt nhpw

ink r 'n r 'pn

iw it-i r 'm ...

dd mdw wn(m) hk3.w mi-kd sn²⁰³

I have become an akh because of the food
of the red one.

The doers of evil have no power to hack up
my favorite place in the whole two land.

I have eaten of their magic,

I have swallowed of their magical power.

My power in me is more than theirs.

Their magical powers are in my arms,

their ba(s) are in me,

their shadows are with their lords,

their magic is inside my belly/body.

The very-hidden-one which is in the middle
of the district of the Silent Ones captures
them for me.

It is a star, which rules the east of the sky,
which brings to me

the 3 'w¹⁹⁹ of their nets²⁰⁰.

The daughter of my father is among them.

Excellent is he who knows how to cut off
(the head), on his own, of the centipede at
(his) coming forth from it²⁰¹.

The meat for me is for my breakfast of
today,

the meat of the slaughtering of the early
morning.

I am Ra of today.

my father is Ra ...²⁰²

Words to say to eat the magic powers,
entirely.

The text lacks the great brutality of PT 273-274, but is only apparently losing its cannibalistic nature. As a matter of fact, the deceased is openly said to be living on the forms of gods ('nh m hpr.w ntr.w) as well as to have eaten (wn) their flesh (mh3.t). Again, the feasting is aimed at the absorption of the gods' magical power in order for the deceased to become mightier than the deities. Bas too are absorbed (iw b3-sn hr-i), but in this spell shadows are said to be still in the possession of their owners (iw š.wt-sn

¹⁹⁷ Only in G2T.

¹⁹⁸ S1C and S2C have the male god determinative; G2T has correctly the female one.

¹⁹⁹ The meaning of this word, as well as of its variation w3w, determined by the fish sigh, is incomprehensible. The dictionary of Egyptian coffin text by Molen does not translate it either (Cf. Molen, 2001, p. 1).

²⁰⁰ The object of the suffix sn is unclear. For the translation of izd.t with the word "net" see Molen, 2001, p. 16.

²⁰¹ The only logical antecedent for -s is izd.wt-sn.

²⁰² Perhaps nothing is missing.

²⁰³ Transcription based on the inner coffin of mshti, with integration from his outer coffin (S1C and S2C; De Buck, 1954, p. 177-183).

hr nb-sn). This element making up human being is thus apparently uninjured but, on the other hand, the physical body of these deities is mutilated. For instance, the god Shesemu slaughters (*sft*) and cooks them. Anyway, the terms employed somewhat differ from those of PT 273-274, which are strictly connected with the ritual slaughtering. Precisely, CT 573 places very little emphasis on this aspect. For instance, the verb *psf* (“to cook”) is used in particular in relation with fishes or birds caught by nets, as well as the term *sft* (“to slaughter”)²⁰⁴. Even though the word *rhs* (“to slaughter”), used in connection with slaughtering cattle²⁰⁵, is indeed employed in the later version of the incantation, it only occurs once. On the contrary, in PT 273-274 it appears three times and with great emphasis. Thus, the general impression we have is that of a text less focused on the ritual slaughtering and favoring a more moderate setting of the ritual scene, omitting the brutal details found in its earlier version. In the case of CT 573, among the consumed gods feature the sunfolk (*hnmm.t*) and chaos-deities (*hh.w*)²⁰⁶.

In conclusion, the divine death emerging from PT 273-274 and CT 573 is definitely a violent one and, according to its means, likely implies annihilation, denying to these beings any possibility of survival after their physical death, namely suffering “second death”. Anyway, such a defeat is not the primary purpose of the utterance but is more some sort of a “side effect”. Indeed, the two texts never admit that these deities, owners of great magical powers, experience death, and prefer to highlight the transfiguration of the deceased who is feasting on them instead of the consequences of the ritual consumption. On the other hand, according to a non-literal interpretation, the utterance would just be a never carried out threat and consequently the death of such primordial deities would have never taken place.

Later in time, however, when divine deaths are dealt with more frequently, similar detailed descriptions of eating divine beings are completely lacking. Nevertheless, the idea of eating gods and living on them is preserved and is found also in the later literature. Texts are deprived of the rawness, but not of the meaning.

²⁰⁴ On these terms see Zandee, 1960, p. 144 and p. 121, respectively.

²⁰⁵ On *rhs* see Zandee, 1966, p. 149.

²⁰⁶ See CT 689 quoted below at p. 65-66.

2.6.2. Eating and swallowing gods

A good number of spells collected in the Coffin Texts deals with feeding on gods in order to absorb their powers. The utterances examined above represent some striking and unparalleled evidence. Nevertheless, minor examples can still be found, even though not as detailed as PT 273-274 and his later adaptation CT 573. Some of them just say that the deceased has filled his body with magic, something that, as seen in the previous paragraph, demands physical consumption of divine beings. Thus, the swallowing of gods, which is not mentioned, is implied anyway. To this category belong CT 30, CT 33-35, CT 36, CT 37, CT 241, and lastly CT 650. The first four utterances listed read all the same passage, whereas CT 241 resembles them in a couple of sentences. On the contrary, other spells explicitly deal with the ingestion of gods. They are, for instance, CT 248, CT 275, CT 689, and CT1017. In CT 248 the deceased openly affirms to eat gods²⁰⁷.

Likewise, also CT 689 concerns the feeding (*wnm*) on gods. Here, unlike PT 273-274 and CT 573, the identity of the gods consumed is defined as well as the aim of their consumption. The text does not describe in details the preparation of the meal and elements connecting it to the ritual slaughtering of sacrificial animals are completely lacking as well. Butchering is just mentioned by the deceased in his discourse to Orion and in the god's answer, in which he declares to have brought to the deceased two shares of the cutting²⁰⁸. The spell actually consists of a dialogue between Orion and the dead, who is said to be the god's son and born by Sothis (*spd.t*). The fact that Orion (*s3h*) appears in the spell, as well as in PT 273-274 and in CT 1017, proves the antiquity of the conceptions at the base of this kind of spells. The idea of feeding on gods must have been part of a very ancient tradition, which was abandoned after the Middle Kingdom. Yet, PT 273-274 never names the slaughtered gods; nevertheless, their designation as "the elder" (*sms.w*) suggest their identification with the primeval gods. On the contrary CT 689 clearly mentions Hu and Sia and some unidentified primordial deities.

²⁰⁷ [III, 342 g] *wnm-i ntr.w*.

²⁰⁸ The text is unfortunately damaged and the reconstruction dubious. Cf. De Buck 1956, p. 320, notes 3 and 4.

iw wnm-n N pn ḥḥ ḥw
iw 'm-n-f sīʒ
*(i)w wnm-n-f ḥkʒ.w m ḥkʒ*²¹⁰

N has eaten the primeval gods and Hu,
 he has swallowed Sia²⁰⁹,
 he has eaten the magic of the magician.

All of them are strictly connected with the primeval times. The primeval deities (*ḥḥ*) represent indeed chaos-forces which preexisted creation. As for Hu and Sia, they too came into existence before the creation of the world. The former personifies the “utterance” (*ḥw*) of the creator god and consequently the might of the spoken word, whereas the latter embodies “knowledge” also in the sense of the faculties of perception and discernment²¹¹. Thus, they definitely represent two elements that the deceased wants to possess in order to become almighty. However, contrary to PT 273-274 and CT 573 they should not be properly considered as deities but rather personifications of such faculties. Consequently, in this instance the deceased is not actually physically consuming and ingesting divine beings, as explained in details in PT 273-274 and CT 573. The deceased simply acquires these abilities by means of the metaphor of feeding on them, as demonstrated in particular by the last of the above quoted lines. So, the deceased states that Hu is in his body and Sia in his heart, meaning that he has acquired these two characteristics. Their importance is vital, being Hu one of the fundamental aspects of the sun god and, as well as Sia, an equally important feature of the king. The proof is the stela of Kouban (museum of Grenoble, Inv. MG 1937, MG 1969, MG 3565), one of the most important sources for the study of the royal ideology of the Ramesside Period. It dates back to the third year of the reign of Ramses II and in the eulogy uttered by the courtiers (lines 13-19) the intellectual qualities of the king are exalted. In line 18 we read: “you are the living image on the earth of your father Atum in Heliopolis, Hu is in your mouth, Sia in your heart, and your tongue is the sanctuary of Maat²¹²”.

According to CT 689, by feeding on these deities, the deceased turns into a mighty god, physically strong and smart. According to his new divine rank he says to have repelled Apophis and that there is no other god who is capable of doing what he has done. The concerned passage reads:

²⁰⁹ The word has the divine determinative.

²¹⁰ Transcription after De Buck, 1956, p. 319 l-n.

²¹¹ Altenmüller, 1980, col. 65; Posener, 1960, p. 47-48.

²¹² Cf. Tresson, 1922, p. 7; Kitchen, 1996, p. 356.

CT 689

<i>hsf-n-i '3pp m 3.t-f</i>	I have repelled Apophis in his strength.
<i>nn ntr ir irt-n(-i)</i>	There is no god who can do what I have done.
<i>iw rdi 3h.w nb n N pn in h3.w nbi(.t)</i>	Every power has been given to this N by those who are behind the flame.
<i>iw rdi n-f rh.wy <m> pw</i>	The two rivals ²¹³ have been given him,
<i>wnm hk3 m gs dp.ty dmy</i>	the eater of magic on the side of the two barks together.
<i>iw wnm-n-f sny it-n-f b3.w-sn</i>	He has eaten them, he has taken their bas,
<i>nhm-n-f 3h.w-sn</i>	he has taken away their magic.
<i>'pr-n-f 3h nb m ...²¹⁴ h3.w 3h.w-f r-sn</i>	He has equipped every akh with ... who are behind his magical power over them.
<i>iw in-n-f tm</i>	He has brought everything;
<i>n rdi-f nwd m h.t nt 3h.w nb²¹⁵</i>	he has not caused to refrain from the body of every akh.

In CT 275 different verbs are employed, having probably a different shade of meaning which escapes us. Yet, the term '*m*' actually seems to be in connection with the consuming of the ba²¹⁶.

CT 275

<i>iw 'm-n N pn psd.t</i>	This N has swallowed the Ennead
<i>wšb m i 'r.t²¹⁷</i>	and fed on the uraeus.

Mention of swallowing the uraeus-serpents also occurs in an earlier spell from the *Pyramid Texts*, whose beginning is found in CT 86, CT 87, and CT 374. In PT 318 the king is equated to the *n* 'w-serpent²¹⁸ and is said to swallow ('*m*) the seven uraei (*sfh i 'r.wt*). The later CT 86 and CT 87 are almost the same, whereas CT 374 is practically a copy of the earlier PT 318. Having eaten them, the deceased has his seven neck-vertebrae coming into existence, which have power over the seven Enneads. In this way, once again, the deceased takes away their powers (*wsr.wt*).

²¹³ Horus and Seth (Wb 2, 441.13).

²¹⁴ Small blank space, possibly an omission by the scribe.

²¹⁵ Transcription after De Buck, 1956, p. 320 u – 321 h.

²¹⁶ Cf. Zandee, 1960, p. 160.

²¹⁷ Transcription after De Buck, 1951, p. 16 d-e.

²¹⁸ Teti 307 has "the bull of the ennead" (*k3 psd.t*); Sethe, 1908, p. 261, § 511a.

Back to compositions concerning the feeding on gods, also CT 1017 consists in a dialogue between the deceased and Orion. Firstly, the deceased himself makes a statement which is then paraphrased by Orion, alternating four speeches²¹⁹. In the first one by the deceased, he affirms to have consumed gods and achieved great powers; Orion then restates what the deceased has said.

CT 1017

r3 n 'nh m hk3.w m gs.wy dp.t m pr.wy

Spell to live of magic and protection in the two houses.

i s3h m kwı ıı-kwı m hk3 b3k.t

Oh, Orion! Here I am. I have come as a ruler of the moringa tree²²⁰.

wnm-n-i k3.w wšb-n-i m hms.wt

I have eaten kas and have fed on the seated ones.

'nh-i m 3h.w ntr.w sms.w

I live on the akhs and the elder gods.

in n-i št3.w rn

Those of the secret names have been brought to me.

iw dmd-n-i gs.wy m pr.wy

I have assembled the protection of the two houses.

{ ... }

{ ... }

iw ıt-n-i wsr.wt-sn

I have taken their powers,

iw 'm-n-i 3h.w-sn

I have swallowed their akhs,

iw wnm-n-i hk3.w-sn

I have eaten their magic.

iw ır-n-i hr.t m dšr.t tħn.tı

I have made a slaughter of bright blood²²¹.

iw-i m 3h 'pr²²²

I have come as an equipped akh.

In the above discussed examples, the gods on which the deceased feeds were primeval deities – or the Ennead, in the sense of a group of gods, in the case of CT 275. The consumption of such entities was always aimed at absorbing their magical powers in order for the deceased to acquire a divine rank in his turn. In PT 273-274 the massacre of divinities is an integral part of the offering ritual, and the terms employed as well as the actions performed are in strict connection with the slaughtering of offering animal. Similar to this concept is a passage of CT 839 in which Seth, in the form of a bull, is butchered and offered to Osiris as a sacrifice and punishment for his

²¹⁹ The fourth speech by the deceased has either been omitted or reduced to a single brief sentence (VII, 239 j).

²²⁰ In the text the term has a feminine form.

²²¹ Blood is also an important element in butchering and consumption of the victims. As a matter of fact, as for the followers of Seth, in the *Pyramid Texts* Anubis is asked, along with taking their hearts, to also drink their blood (PT 532, §1286c).

²²² Transcription after De Buck, 1961, p. 236 a-f and p-t.

evil doing. As a matter of fact, the spell opens with the death of Osiris, who is said to have fallen on his side, a typical euphemism to describe his death.

CT 839

...-k <i>ii.k(wi) it wsir ink sz-k</i>	I have come, father Osiris, I am your son.
<i>ink hr</i>	I am Horus,
<i>ii-n(-i) [in (?)] ... -k pw</i>	[I] have come [that I may bring(?) to you] ²²³
<i>rdi[-n(-i) n]-k sw h[fti(?)] hr-k</i>	I gave it to you, the foe(?) of yours.
... ²²⁴
<i>di-n n-k tm sw m dw</i>	Atum has given him to you as an evil one,
<i>šsrw-f hnm.t im-f m rn-f pw n šsr</i>	him whom the sunfolk slay, being with it in this
	its name of sacrificial bull.
<i>in-n(-i) n-k sw m k3 m mt m hh-f</i>	I have brought it to you as a bull with a
	duct(?) ²²⁵ in its throat.
<i>kk sw idp-f²²⁶ tp-f n iš.wt-k nb.t n-k</i>	Eat it, taste its head in all your meals belonging
<i>iw 'w-f n-i</i>	to you, since your legacy belongs to me.
<i>ink iw 'w-k hr ns.t-k²²⁷</i>	I am your heir on your throne.

The same concept is recalled in the *Book of Overthrowing Apophis* (pBremner-Rhind). The text deals with the defeat of the evil serpent in very explicit terms and his slaughtering is one of the central themes of the entire composition. A passage in 30,14-15 reads:

pBremner-Rhind

<i>šsp ntr nb [30,15] šb.t²²⁸-sn im-k</i>	All the gods take possession of their meat
	offering (?) out of you;
<i>hṭp ib-sn hr irw šzyd-k²²⁹</i>	their hearts are satisfied at making a
	slaughtering of you.

²²³ The restoration is by Faulkner, 1978, p. 27.

²²⁴ The text is almost completely erased; only a few dispersed signs have survived. Faulkner (1978, p. 27) reconstructs the passage as follows: “and the Enneads [have] put him beneath you [for] you [...] a long-horn [...] in this his name of [...]”.

²²⁵ The term means “duct”, “vessel”, “muscle” (FCD, p. 120) or “tendon” (Molen, 2001, p. 188-189) for example in connection with the temporomandibular joint on the neck (Wb 2, 167.9-13). It could possibly refer either to a blood vessel of the neck being cut or to the windpipe being strangled. Whatever the true meaning is, the slaughtering of the animal is implied as the following sentence shows.

²²⁶ To read *idp-k*.

²²⁷ Transcription after De Buck, 1961, p. 42 l - 43f.

²²⁸ As Faulkner suggested (1938, p. 50) the writing of this word is likely to be intended as *šb* or *šb.t* “meat portion (as offering)” which is also used to designate the dismembered limbs of the hippopotamus as symbol of Seth (Wb 4, 437.3-5).

²²⁹ Transcription after Faulkner, 1933, p. 79.

If the reading is correct, this would suggest that the various gods taking part in the overthrow of Apophis actually feed on him as a sacrificial victim, consuming the portions cut out of his body. It is said similarly of the enemies of Osiris in general in the *Stundenwachen*, in which their flesh is offered to the gods of the sky and of the earth²³⁰.

2.6.3. Living on gods

The Underworld is a place full of dangers for the deceased. Among them are demons, supernatural beings halfway between deities and men. They have different roles and functions, one of which is slaughtering the god's enemies in the reign of the dead. Guardian demons devour those who do not know how to pass the gate they are guarding, whereas others live on men and on various parts of their bodies, such as hearts and intestines²³¹. The idea of feeding on something can indeed be expressed in terms of "to live on something" (*nh m*). Yet, at his arrival in the Netherworld the deceased meets demons which not only eat men, but also live on gods. When the deceased enters the tribunal of Osiris he appears as such a god²³². Chapters BD 181 and BD 79, in which the deceased identifies himself with such a creature, deal with his arrival in the divine tribunal and with his transformation in the greatest (*wr*) of the law court. He needs to be mighty to appear before the divine tribunal and in this way he is as powerful as a divine being²³³. The deceased has acquired such a rank by absorbing the divine powers of the gods he lives on, i.e. whom he has devoured. This conception directly recalls the feasting on gods found in PT 273-274 and CT 573, in which the deceased king or commoner absorbed the *bas* of the primeval deities and transformed himself in a mighty, supernatural being. In the case of CT 306, BD 79 and BD 181 the ritual

²³⁰ Cf. Junker, 1910, p. 60, §§ 75-77. Other references to meat offerings (*šb.tiw*) and choice pieces (*stp.t*) are found in p. 113, §170 and p. 121, §4.

²³¹ For examples see Zandee, 1960, p. 159.

²³² A passage of BD 181 e (Allen number) reads:

ii-n-i h' .ti (sic) m ntr pwy wnm rmt' nh m ntr.w

"I have come, arisen as that god who eats men and lives on gods".

The same is found also in BD 79 and CT 306.

²³³ A passage from BD 79 reads (papyrus of Nu; Budge, 1899, pl. 16-17):

hpr-n-i i tn [h' .k]wi m ntr pwy wnm rmt' nh m ntr.w

wsr-i hr-in m ntr pwy k3 hr i3.t-f

iw n-f ntr.w m h' .wt thh n-f ntr.wt hm.wt m33-sn sw.

"I have come into existence with you, arisen as that god who eats men and lives on gods.

I am mighty before you as that god who is high on his standard,

to whom the gods go in joy, over whom goddesses and women rejoice when they see him".

massacre is not illustrated but the physical consumption of gods is implied in the expression *‘nh m ntr.w*.

2.6.3. Seth’s intimidations

The fact that deities can be killed at least by other gods is found unequivocally in the words uttered by Seth before the Ennead, recorded in *the Contendings of Horus and Seth*, in a passage in which he, furious for being denied Osiris’s legacy, threatens them. It reads:

The Contendings of Horus and Seth

*‘h ‘-n stš hr dd n-sn
iw-i [5,2] tzy pzy-i d mw.t n 4500 n nms.t*

*mtw-i hdbw w im-tn m-mn.t*²³⁵

So Seth said to them:

“I shall take my scepter of 4500 *nemset-weight*²³⁴

and I shall kill one among you daily”.

There is no ambiguity about the meaning of the verb *hdb*, indeed meaning “to kill someone”²³⁶, also referring to the massacre of enemies in battle. So, the choice of this word is quite interesting, since such a similar directness is generally avoided. Obviously, in this case, a menace demands it²³⁷. According to Seth’s words, he needs his scepter in order to murder the gods of the Ennead. This could possibly mean that the great gods could only be killed by means of divine weapons or, alternatively, that Seth, at least, needs a weapon. In fact the daily struggle against Apophis, where he also takes part, Seth repels the evil serpent with a spear²³⁸. In this regard, *Contendings of Horus and Seth* also narrates two examples of divine major body mutilation, explicitly mentioning the weapon used to inflict them. The first event is the beheading of Isis at the hands of his son. During the struggle between Horus and Seth in the form of two hippopotamuses, Isis shows mercy towards her evil brother, making her son angry. He

²³⁴ The term *nms.t* means “ingot” and is used for metal as standard weight and/or form (Wb 2, 269.9). The given measure should be the equivalent of some 2,000 kg (4,500 lb.).

²³⁵ Papyrus Chester Beatty I, 5,1-5, 2; Gardiner, 1932, p. 42.

²³⁶ Wb 3, 403.3-13.

²³⁷ Threats to gods by magician of deceased persons are attested also in the magic and funerary literature, respectively. Generally speaking, they consist in menaces to deny them ritual offerings or, on the contrary, in promises of benefits in exchange of their cooperation. As for a threat of death uttered to Ra, see p. 151-152.

²³⁸ On Seth’s weapons see te Velde, 196, p. 86-91.

reaches her and with his knife of sixteen *deben* cuts off her head²³⁹. Similarly, later on, after Seth has almost abused of Horus²⁴⁰, Isis severs his son's hands²⁴¹, contaminated by Seth's semen. She too uses a knife but no indication is given about its aspect neither in terms of material nor of weight. However, the meaning of this could possibly be that gods, in order to be injured – and thus killed – need to be struck by a physical weapon. Magic may not be enough, whereas fire is, by its very nature, completely destructive.

The belligerence of Seth is renowned in the context of the struggle between him and Horus. The fact that it could possibly result in death is explicated in a further source. It consists in a passage from a papyrus dating back to the late IV century BC, namely that of the priest Imuthes son of Psintaes and Tjehenet (pMMA 35.9.21). Its first section²⁴² (columns 1-17) consists in the only preserved copy of the *Great Decree Issued to the Nome of the Silent Land* in this whole form, being the text an arrangement of different parts, some of which having some parallels in other sources²⁴³. However, these could be the clearest references to the fact that Nephthys was unfaithful to Seth, cheating on him with Osiris and resulting in the real reason behind the death of the god²⁴⁴. At least, this text would show that cheating, when done by women, was conceived as a crime and punished with death. Despite all of this, what is to be considered for the present study is the complaint by Nephthys in XIV, 9. In the fifth part of the ritual recorded in the composition, Osiris is transported through twenty gates, denoted as “portals of the West” and, during the carriage, Isis and Nephthys lament over their brother. After traversing the fourteenth gate, the two sisters mourn one after the other. Nephthys exclaims²⁴⁵: “I acted in conjunction with you in solitude²⁴⁶. There is no skill of yours to save me. See, I am bound to the lord of eternity with you²⁴⁷”. The interesting line, however, is the following, in which she says: “I am afraid that Seth

²³⁹ pChester Beatty I, 9,8-9,9 (Gardiner, 1932, p. 49):

iw t3y-f hskm d.t-f n 16 dbn iw-f rwy d3d3 n mwt-f s.t

“His knife of sixteen *deben* in his hand, he took off the head of his mother Isis”.

²⁴⁰ On this topic see te Velde, 1967, p. 32-46, and the more recent study by Amenta, 2004.

²⁴¹ pChester Beatty I, 11,5-11,6; Gardiner, 1932, p. 52.

²⁴² Other contents of the papyrus are: *The Ceremony of Glorifying Osiris in the God's Domain* (cols. 18-25), *The Revelations of the Mysteries of the Four Balls* (cols. 26-32), *The Book of Protecting the Neshmet-Bark* (cols. 33-39), *The Ritual for Introducing the Multitude on the Last Day of Tekh* (cols. 40-56), *The Ceremony for Bringing Out Sokar* (cols. 57-62).

²⁴³ An introduction to this composition is found in Smith, 2009, p. 67-75.

²⁴⁴ In PT 477 and CT 837 Seth asserts indeed that his crime was in reality Osiris's fault. On this whole matter see von Lieven, 2006 and in particular p. 146. On Osiris's adultery with Nephthys as it appear in pMMA 35.9.21 see Feder, 2008.

²⁴⁵ The translation of this passage is by Smith, 2009, p. 91.

²⁴⁶ Maybe a reference to sexual intercourse.

²⁴⁷ In VII, 9 Nephthys asked: “Are you bound for the land of eternity” (Smith, 2009, p. 82). Next to this line, is also found another possible reference to sexual activity.

might kill (*smꜣ*) me”²⁴⁸. Her fear, as explained in the her conversation with Horus, is due to the fact that she has kept Seth away from the young god and now she asks in exchange to be allowed to see Osiris. Now, the goddess’s concerns would be meaningless if Seth’s threat was not concrete. Nevertheless, the text gives no information as to how her assassination could possibly be accomplished, nor about the weapon Seth would eventually use. However, this fact, considering the subject, is maybe to be regarded in connection²⁴⁹ with another one narrated in papyrus Brooklyn 47.218.84, a collection of mythological tales related to various cities of the Delta. The passage concerned pertains to Letopolis (VII, 10 – VIII, 2), a city mentioned especially in relation to the myth of Osiris and the god’s shoulder blade. There Seth, by means of a lamp and assisted by an *abḏ.w*-fish, is said to be looking for his wife, who hid along the riverbank, and to find her immediately²⁵⁰. However, no violent action performed on her is mentioned.

2.6.5. *Death by fire*

Fire was considered to be a destructive element in ancient Egypt. Used as a weapon, it assured the total defeat of the victim, completely destroying the physical body and thus denying every possibility of an afterlife, resulting in “second death”. In the Netherworld the gods’ enemies are indeed burned by flames as a punishment and the use of fire is also fundamental in execration rituals, aimed at the total destruction of the incantation’s target. Being burned by fire, especially by the flames emitted by the eye of Horus or spitted by the uraeus, is one of the tortures inflicted to Apophis²⁵¹. Nevertheless, fire can prove to be dangerous also for the major deities of the pantheon, turning out as something that can actually kill a god. Magical texts deal with burnings hurting Horus as a child²⁵², but a text from the Ptolemaic Period offers a much more interesting evidence. The composition is engraved on the outside of the granite naos of Ismailia.

²⁴⁸ *iw-ī snd.kw(ī) m smꜣ (w)ī stš*. (Goyon, 1999, p. 43, pl. XIII, XIII A). Alternatively the line can also be translated: “I am afraid of my slayer, Seth” (Smith, 2009, p. 91). The meaning does not change anyway.

²⁴⁹ Meeks, 2006, p. 229; Von Lieven, 2006, p. 146.

²⁵⁰ Meeks, 1989, p. 300; Meeks, 2006, p. 17, §18, and commentary p. 226-229.

²⁵¹ See in particular p. 173-174, 180, and 183-185.

²⁵² Cf. Borghouts, 1978, p. 24-26, nos. 34-36.

The text opens with a brief hunt for the succession of Shu on the throne of his father Ra, the former too flying to heaven. After ascending to the throne and entering Iat-nebes, Geb hears about the exploits achieved by his predecessors with the help of the royal uraeus. Thus, he decides to put it on his forehead, just as Ra and Shu have done before him, but when he tries to do it the uraeus burns him badly and kills the god in his retinue. The severe injuries of Geb are then cured by putting on the headdress (*ỉꜣr.t*) of Ra, which, when washed in the sacred pool of the city, transforms into Sobek of Iat-nebes. The naos was inscribed in the XXX Dynasty but this episode might perhaps date back to an earlier time. A passage in CT 377, a snake spell, states that “the fire goes up against Geb” (V, 40 a). Nevertheless, a connection between these two pieces of evidence is pure conjecture.

Naos of Ismailia

gb pw ʿk r pr-ỉꜣr.t ʰn ʿntr.w n nty r ʰn ʿf

ʰ ʿ-n nwdt ʿ r kf ʿfd.t nty [ʰh] [15] [w ʿ.t]
im st

pr pw ỉr-n s3-t3 ʰh-n-f t3w-f r ʰm n gb m
nšn-f wr sp 2

hp.w pw ỉr-n nty r-ht-f

šmm pw ỉr-n [ʰm n] [16] [pn]

wđꜣy pw ỉr-n ʰm-f r mh.tt n ỉꜣ.t n[bs] ʰr
*šmm pn n ʰr-tp w ʿ.t*²⁵⁵

Then, Geb entered in Pi-iarit with the gods who were with him.

So, he outstretched his arm to reach²⁵³ the chest in which was the living uraeus.

The snake exited and blew²⁵⁴ its breath against the majesty of Geb with a great rage.

Those who were with him died.

The majesty of this god was burnt.

His majesty proceeded to the north of Iat-nebes still affected by the heat²⁵⁶ of the uraeus which is on the head.

The flames issued from the mouth of the royal uraeus are not sufficient to kill Geb, even though he is burnt (*šmm*, literally “to be hot”) by them. On the contrary, as the text narrates, the gods accompanying him are all dead (*hp*). The verb *hpi* is used euphemistically to refer to death as well, actually meaning “to go away”²⁵⁷, also found in the expression *hpi n k3-f*, “to go to one’s ka”. However, in our case the term *hp.w*²⁵⁸, the predicate of the nominal sentence, is determined with the sign of the dead man,

²⁵³ Literally “leaning forward”.

²⁵⁴ According to Griffith (1890, p. 72) the verb *ʰh* has been chosen for the sake of alliteration with *ʰh.yt*, name of a sacred serpent, which he integrates in the previous line.

²⁵⁵ Transcription after Goyon, 1936, p. 16.

²⁵⁶ Literally “under the heat”.

²⁵⁷ Cf. Zandee, 1960, p. 54.

²⁵⁸ As a substantive *hp* means indeed “departed one” or “the deceased” (Wb 3, 259.4-5).

leaving no ambiguity about its true meaning. Besides, the use of fire might possibly result in the “second death” of the gods in the retinue of Geb.

2.6.6. *Death by cataclysm*

Even though the main part of the evidence comes from the funerary literature, examples of divine death are given by literary texts as well. Among those is the *Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor*, recorded on the papyrus Leningrad 1115, the only preserved copy of the composition which dates back to the Middle Kingdom²⁵⁹. The tale has a story-within-story structure. The beginning is missing, not having been copied by the scribe, and the papyrus opens with a first-person account of the adventure lived by a sailor, lone survivor of a shipwreck and now a high-official. He narrates his story to encourage an official in charge of an unsuccessful commercial expedition to eloquently report to the king, learning from the account of his own extraordinary adventure. As a matter of fact, the sailor has survived the shipwreck, being washed up on an island of the Red Sea, inhabited by a giant serpent (*ḥf3.w*), who predicted his return home and the disappearance of the island, which will turn into water (*nw.y*)²⁶⁰. The description of the serpent, who reveals to be the ruler of Punt (*ḥk3 pwn.t*), matches that of a god, identifying him as a divine being²⁶¹, as supported also by the phenomena taking place just before this epiphany²⁶². After the sailor has told him about the shipwreck on the island and the loss of all his companions, it is the serpent’s turn to narrate a story. He explains how, one day, he lost all of his family.

²⁵⁹ Lichtheim, 1973, p. 211.

²⁶⁰ It is one of the frequent allusions throughout ancient Egyptian literature, especially occurring in magical texts, to the return of the world to the chaos (Nun) preceding the creation.

²⁶¹ Cf. Bresciani, 1969, p. 175, note 2.

²⁶² The description of the encounter with the serpent is given in §§ 56-65:

‘ḥ ‘-n *sḏm-n-i ḥrw kṛi ib.kwi w3w pw n w3d-wr*

ḥ.tw ḥr gmgm t3 ḥr mnmn

kf-n-i ḥr-i gm-n-i ḥf3.w pw iw-f m ii.t

ni-sw mh 30 ḥbsw.t-f wr-s r mh 2 ḥ ‘.w-f s3r.w m nbw inh.wy-fy m ḥsbd m3 ‘

“Then I heard a thunder (literally “the voice of the storm”) and I supposed it was a wave of the sea.

Trees were breaking. The earth was trembling.

When I uncovered my face I found it was a serpent coming.

He measured thirty cubits, his beard was longer than two cubits, his flesh was gilded, his eyebrows of true lapis lazuli.”

The physical description of the snake equates that of gods, whose skin was indeed believed to be made of gold and whose hair of lapis lazuli. The term *ḥbsw.t* in particular denotes the divine beard (Wb 3, 255.13). Moreover, the description of the natural phenomena provoked by his approaching implies some kind of magical powers.

The Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor

sdd-i rf n-k mī.tt ỉry hpr.w m iw pn

[126] *wn-i im-f hn ' sn.w-i*

hrd.w [127] *m k3b-sn*

km-n-n hf3.w 75 m [128] *ms.w-i hn ' sn.w-i*

nn sh3-i n-k [129] *s3.t kt.t in.t n-i m sš3*

h ' -n sb3 [130] *h3.w pr-n n3 m h.t m- ' -f*

hpr-n r-s(n) nn wi hn ' [131]

3m-ny nn wi m hr-ib-sn

h ' -n-i m(w)t.kwi n-sn

gm-n-i [132] *st m h3y.t w ' .t*²⁶⁴

I will recount you something similar,
happened on this island,

in which I was with my brothers and
sisters

and children among them.

We were seventy-five²⁶³ serpents in all
with my children and my siblings;

and I will not remind you a young
daughter, who was brought to me by
means of pray.

Then a star fell and they went up in flames
because of it.

This happened when I was not with
(them).

They burned when I was not among them.

Then, I died for them,

when I found them in one heap of corpses.

Since the serpent is a divine being, we can presume the same for the members of his family too. Their decease is said to be basically a death by fire caused by a star (*sb3*) fallen on the ground. The verb *3m* (“to burn”) is primarily used in reference to the punishment of the enemies of Osiris and Ra, especially in the Duat²⁶⁵, causing their total destruction (“second death”). Similarly, also the term *h3y.t* (“heap of corpses”) is used in connection with enemies and battles²⁶⁶. This is definitely no euphemism to describe them as dead bodies and there is likewise no mitigation by use of periphrases or allusive terms. The snakes are not simply portrayed as inert ones – like Osiris, for instance – depicting their death as a sleep; on the contrary, they are clearly said to be a pile of dead bodies. This statement, however, has an important implication, namely that their corpses have not been entirely consumed by the flames that burned them up. At least, this is what the image of *h3y.t* suggests. The fact that they are killed by fire is also interesting if we consider that generally snakes, as the uraei, are said to spit fire to punish the god’s enemy. However, in this case, the flames are caused by a cataclysm, namely a falling star descended from the sky (*sb3 h3.w*).

²⁶³ A parallel to the seventy-five invocation to the sun god listed in the *Litanies of Ra* has often been noted; Cf. Hornung, 1999, p. 138.

²⁶⁴ Transcription after Blackman, 1932, p. 45.

²⁶⁵ For references and examples see Zandee, 1960, p. 133.

²⁶⁶ Cf. Wb 3, 360.1-3.

As for the total absence of restraint when dealing with a divine death, we can explain it with the fact that we are simply dealing with a tale, which does not involve any major god of the ancient Egyptian pantheon. Moreover, the account of the snake is intended as an encouragement to bear a loss or deal with a difficult situation with great fortitude. The account is thus to be intended as a teaching, an aim that evidently justifies the divine serpent's words.

2.7. Every god dies

The idea that gods could die was already part of ancient Egyptian beliefs at the end of the Old Kingdom, as the *Pyramid Texts* demonstrate. In these spells, divine death is both described in very allusive terms and explicitly portrayed in the account of the slaughter performed by the deceased pharaoh on the primeval gods. In this regard, up to the Old Kingdom, death has been associated with certain deities only – such as Osiris, Ra, the gods said to have gone to their kas and the *ḥk3*-gods – but, with time passing by, this list enlarges remarkably. As a matter of fact, the idea that *every* god can die starts to emerge. Spell CT 282, “not to lie in the place of execution” (*tm sḏr m nmt*) clearly claims it. The incantation describes the consequences of the deceased's ascension to the sky when he acquires the faculties of the main god.

CT 282

iw ḏd r wsîr N pn pr st

dr nrw-f m p.t

ḥ3 snḏ m 3ḥ.t

ḥr rf ntr.w m(w)t.w 'ḫ.w ḥr ḥr-sn

m33t-sn wsîr N pn m pr.t-f tp wt

k3-f m ḥnw k3r

(i)tt wsîr N pn wsr.w nb w²⁶⁹

It is said of this Osiris N that (his) odor goes up

and that the terror of him has been removed from the sky.

The fear (of him) comes down the horizon, the gods²⁶⁷ fall dead and the akhs are in front of their faces

when they see this Osiris N at his going up on *wt*²⁶⁸.

He is exalted in the shrine.

This Osiris N has taken possession of all the powers of the One.

²⁶⁷ Sq3C reads: *ḥr rf ntr.w nb 'ḫ.w nb m(w)t.w*.

²⁶⁸ The meaning of *wt* is unknown. Cf. Molen, 2001, p. 105.

²⁶⁹ Transcription after De Buck, 1951, p. 31j-32d.

The variant of Sq3C reads instead that *all gods* fall dead, even giving a stronger emphasis to this idea. Their departure is certainly in connection with the deceased ascent to heaven. Even though the text never states it, we can suppose that it is the deceased who kills them somehow. A mass “natural” death is indeed very unlikely. Could this possibly be a veiled allusion to ritual consumption of deities? The utterance actually offers no further hints about this.

2.8. Gods living after death

In the ancient Egyptian writing record mentions of dead gods explicitly said to have perished are rare. This chapter is aimed at proving that evidence of divine death are indeed more numerous than what we would actually expect from a society like the ancient Egyptian one, extremely reticent on the matter. Nevertheless, terms openly affirming this concept, as the verb *mwt* for instance, are even more extraordinary. Of course, in such cases, this “boldness” must have its explanation in the symbolic meaning of the concerned divine death. Since in ancient Egypt death was not an end in itself, the explanation for it is obviously rebirth. This is true for Neper and *sk-wr*, said to live after their death. As for Neper, two spells of the *Coffin Texts* report this notice, namely CT 99 and CT 101. Similarly, *sk-wr* is mentioned in CT 102. The texts in question are part of a group of spells (CT 99–104) originated in the First Intermediate Period and dealing with the release of the ba²⁷⁰. What the three concerned spells have in common is the fact that the ba is sent out from the body of the deceased.

2.8.1. Neper

Anthropologists tend to interpret divine death and rebirth as a metaphor for the cycle of agriculture, being the concerned god generally considered a personification of crops. This actually applies for Neper. He is the incarnation of the annual new-grown crops and is thus related to Osiris likely as soon as the VI Dynasty²⁷¹. Nevertheless, this connection is apparent in the *Coffin Texts*, in which we find the mention of the grain-

²⁷⁰ Two different interpretations are possible: the first one which considers the ba an integral part of a living person who was released at death; the second one dealing with capacities lost at death which are described as effluxes coming out of the body and forming thus the ba. These two aspects are discussed in Williams, 1962, p. 52. For a brief introduction on the ba see p. 13-15.

²⁷¹ Budge, 1911, p. 80.

god as a deity who lives after death. Unlike Osiris, who was believed to have resurrected but was in any case confined to the Netherworld, Neper is actually explicitly said both to have died and also to live again. His death and life are conceived as something cyclical, as witnessed in the annual cycle of agriculture. Consequently his death and subsequent rebirth were witnessed by the ancient Egyptian and thus acknowledged, just like in regard to the sun god. The two concerned spells are CT 99 and CT 101.

CT 99

šm-k r rdw n iwf-i r fd.t n tp-i

You shall go according to the efflux of my flesh and the sweat of my head.

pr-r-k m dw3.t wbn.w

You shall go out from the Duat (to) the sunrise

wbn-sn im-f prrw-sn im-f

in which they shine, from which they go out,

h3zw-sn im-f

from which they descend.

in npr pw hty 'nh m-ht mt-f itt tw r m33 s pf

It is Neper of the smoked grain²⁷² who lives after his death who takes you to see this man

m bw nb nt f im

in every place in which he is,

m irw-i km3-i šs3-i m3w n.w 3h 'nh²⁷³

in my shape, in my form, in my wisdom, the new state of a living akh.

CT 101

iw wn n-k šw r(m)n-f

Shu opens his arms for you;

iw h3b-n tw ir.t smn²⁷⁴-s

she who makes her mainstay(?)²⁷⁵ has sent you.

in npr pw²⁷⁶ 'nh r-f m-ht mt-f šdd tw m sb3

It is Neper who lives after his death and who takes you away from the door of the sunshine.

pw n izh.w

pr-r-k im-f rdw n.w iwf-i kis.w tp-i

You go out of it by means of the effluxes of my flesh and of the sweat²⁷⁷ of my head,

²⁷² As Faulkner points out, *hty* in an adjective qualifying *npr* but its real meaning is obscure (1973, p. 98). Cf. also Wb 3, 182.12. However, the god's epithet is *npr-hty.t*; cf. LGG IV, p. 203.

²⁷³ Transcription after De Buck, 1938, p. 95 a-f.

²⁷⁴ B2L and B2P read *smny*.

²⁷⁵ Since Shu is mentioned in the previous line, this term might be somehow conceptually in connection with *smn.ti*, "the two supports (of heaven)", namely Shu and Tefnut (Wb 4, 135.6), and hence the goddess referred to might possibly be Tefnut. Nevertheless, S1C, B2L and B2P have the determinative of male deity with divine beard but they all read the female form of the participle. Only G2T has the female determinative, whereas B1C has no divine determinative at all.

²⁷⁶ B1C and B2L add *št.w pw n wsir*, "and hundreds of Osiris".

²⁷⁷ *kis* literally means "vomit".

*r-gs tni irw-f nb-tm*²⁷⁸

in the presence of the lifting up which the
Lord of All has made²⁷⁹.

Spells from the *Coffin Texts*, as for instance CT 269, parallel also the resurrection of the deceased with the sprouting of barley from the body of Osiris, in his turn equated to Neper, who is indeed the lord of tharvest and prosperity. Concepts of death and rebirth in connection with vegetation are expressed more explicitly than ever in CT 330, whose title is indeed “to become Neper” (*hpr m npr*). The vegetative regeneration symbolized by Neper mirrors the renewal that also human being expected. Even though the incantation is one of the most obscure, it is quite clear that the deceased, who is speaking in first person, identifies himself with Neper and consequently with grain²⁸⁰. He therefore affirms to live and die just as cereals do in the cyclical death and rebirth of vegetation. This is actually the way in which Neper’s death is explained: he has to perish in order to come to life again, renewed and rejuvenated. Here is a passage of the text at issue, in which the deceased speaks in the role Neper:

CT 330

<i>nh-i mwt-i</i>	I live, I die ²⁸¹ .
<i>ink wsir pr-n-i k-n-i im-k</i> ²⁸²	I am Osiris and I have come out and gone in through you;
<i>dd3-n-i im-k</i>	I have ripened in you;
<i>rd-n-i im-k</i>	I have grown in you;
<i>hr-n-i im-k</i> ²⁸³	I have fallen in you;
<i>hr-n-i hr gs-i</i>	I have fallen on my side (i.e. died).
<i>nh ntr.w im-i</i>	The gods live on me.
<i>nh-i rd-i m npr</i> ²⁸⁴	I live and I grow like Neper,
<i>sd im3h.w</i>	whom the honored ones raise(?),
<i>h3pw-i gb</i>	whom Geb keeps secret.
<i>nh-i mwt-i</i>	I live and I die,
<i>ink it</i>	because I am grain
<i>n htm-i</i> ²⁸⁵	and I will not be destroyed.

²⁷⁸ Transcription after De Buck, 1938, p. 99 c – 101 b.

²⁷⁹ As Faulkner underlines, it could be an allusion to the primeval god lifting up the world from the Nun (1973, p. 99, note 7). Nevertheless, G2T and P2B put forward a different translation: *r-gs tni irw nb-tm*, “in the presence of the lifting up of the shape of the Lord of All”.

²⁸⁰ The deceased declares to be the grain god also in CT 80, made thus by Atum (II, 40 e-f).

²⁸¹ Vice versa in B2Bo.

²⁸² It is not clear to whom *im-k* refers.

²⁸³ S1C^b repeats it twice.

²⁸⁴ S2C adds: *i m npr*, “I am Neper”.

²⁸⁵ Transcription after De Buck, 1951, p. 168 b – 169 h.

Neper, with whom the deceased is identified, affirms to live and die (*sdm-f* form). This is opposed to CT 99 and CT 101, in which the *sdm-n-f* form is used, meaning that the action has actually concluded but indeed happened. When CT 330 employs the *sdm-n-f* form in connection with the moment of dying, it does not use the verb *mwt* and employs instead a euphemism, namely “to fall on one’s side” (*hr-n-i hr gs-i*). So, since the god’s death is acknowledged, it has to be mitigated by means of a euphemistic expression.

2.8.2. *Sk-wr*

We know so little about this deity²⁸⁶, attested in Middle Kingdom only. His name possibly means “the great constellation” and is classified by the divine determinative, leaving no doubt about his divine nature. His only appearance in ancient Egyptian sources is in CT 102, in which *Sk-wr* is addressed as the hunter²⁸⁷ of Heliopolis, but a more interesting statement testifies that he lives after his death.

CT 102

*i sk-wr n iwn.w 'nh m-ht mt-f*²⁸⁸

Oh, *sk-wr* hunter of Heliopolis who lives after his death.

The utterance gives us no further hint about him, neither in regard to his identity nor about his death and consequent rebirth. The only possible explanation in this sense is to be found in his nature as a cosmological deity. Indeed, if his name has been interpreted correctly, *sk-wr* could possibly be a setting and rising star²⁸⁹ of the ancient Egyptian sky. His cycle as a star must therefore have inspired the vision of him as a god dying and being reborn, since the ancient Egyptians could observe its disappearance but also admire its comeback. However, a similar terminology is found in reference to the sun god as well but, contrarily to this example, this aspect is only recalled in connection with the deceased, functioning as a promise of rebirth.

²⁸⁶ Cf. LGG VI, p. 661.

²⁸⁷ This translation is yet uncertain and is based just on the stem *nw*. Cf. Wb 2, 217.1.

²⁸⁸ Transcription after De Buck, 1938, p. 105 e.

²⁸⁹ In B2L and B2P his name has indeed the star determinative. Cf. De Buck, 1938, p. 105.

2.9. Summary and cross references

This chapter opens with an investigation about the possibility for gods to grow old. Ancient Egyptian sources actually acknowledged this aspect at least from the New Kingdom, but in the *Pyramid Texts* a deity is actually designated as *nḥḥ* "the old one". Being subject to time leads to the accomplishment of one's lifetime and consequently to a natural death opposed to a violent one. A good example of this is the Theban Ogdoad. Old age possibly affects all the gods and sooner or later all of them have to descend in the West. As a matter of fact, in the New Kingdom this location is designated as the place created by Osiris for the bas of the gods and in which Ra decreed for all of them to descend. In this sense, since the necropolis was properly created for gods, divine death would ideally precede the coming into existence of human death. Nevertheless, the text explaining the origin of the West (BD 17) has some characteristics that attribute its edition to the Middle Kingdom, the same period in which the idea that all the all gods (*nṯr.w nb*) can die (CT 282) originated. Similar is a passage from the *Book of Gates* (first division) in which deities are mentioned next to mortal creatures such as human beings and animals. Besides, from the Middle Kingdom the cyclical end of creation was conceived and with it also the return of all things, including gods, to a state preexisting creation. This would result in a temporary end of existence preceding a new creation for gods too. A natural divine death is consequently acknowledged next to a violent one, demonstrating once more that deities were never believed to be immortal by the ancient Egyptians. They were only in the sense that they would never cease to exist, suffering the so called "second death", since deceased gods lived eternally in the afterlife.

Once established that gods could die, the chapter explores sources reporting examples of divine death, starting with euphemistic expressions such as "going to one's ka" up to the description of violent death. A very widespread kind of divine death belonging to this category is death by ingestion which could be exemplified in a proper massacre aimed at consuming gods. This account described in PT 273-274 has been quickly discarded, perhaps because considered too brutal to be inscribed in royal tombs, even though consisting just in a menace never actually accomplished. However, the composition appears just once more with some adjustments in CT 573. Nonetheless, the idea of feeding on gods in order to acquire their powers persists in the literary record of the New Kingdom. Result of this procedure might likely be the annihilation ("second

death”) of the divine beings involved. However, the great importance of this utterance for the present study consists in its old age and is most likely the first ever conceived instance of divine death. Further examples of eating gods are found in the *Coffin Texts* and are the exemplification of a more ancient tradition, which disappears by the beginning of the New Kingdom. Yet, a similar tradition stating that the deceased lives on gods continues from the *Coffin Texts* up to the *Book of the Dead*. Beside death inflicted by other means was also conceived, namely inflicted by weapons (*The Contendings of Horus and Seth*) or especially by fire (Naos of Ismailia, *Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor*) in this instance possibly resulting in “second death”.

Whereas gods are often said to die, their resurrection is limited in a few instances. Contrarily to Osiris – who never comes back on the earth as a living, but lives his eternal afterlife in the reign of the dead – gods such as Neper and *sk-wr*, the latter being likely a star, are described in the *Coffin Texts* as gods who die but also who live again (CT 99, CT 101, CT 330, CT 102). The same is said of Ra when assuring the deceased rejuvenation (CT 423, CT 438, BD 3, BD 41). Their resurrection is different from Geb’s, who is indeed brought back to life by his father Shu, which is actually set in the context of myth (pSalt 825). It is indeed based on empirical observation of the phenomenon of the periodical disappearance and reappearance of the three of them: Ra and *sk-wr* in their solar and celestial nature respectively, and Neper in his vegetal one.

CHAPTER 3

OSIRIS¹

As has been long acknowledged, Osiris is the dying god *par excellence*, being his death in connection with many aspects of the ancient Egyptian civilisation, from religion and cults, through politics, agriculture and embalming. As a matter of fact, in addition to his fertility nature, he was the god who “triumphed” over death, a symbol for every dead man, who, in his turn, wished to live after passing away, just like him. The dismembered parts of his body were collected and reassembled in the shape of the first mummy, the typical and sole form in which the god was pictorially represented. The claim of his corpse being the first to be embalmed was actually symbolic, since burial rites, including mummification, have obviously an earlier origin than the evidence of his myth². Having reigned over Egypt while on earth, he maintained his role as a ruler in the realm of the dead and in the New Kingdom, also turning into the judge of dead people entering the Netherworld. Hence, all that he represented was strictly connected with his afterlife more than to his earthly existence.

A parallel tradition to that of his presumed drowning was that of Osiris’s death by dismemberment. The event was narrated by Plutarch and, as for many other elements of the myth, the ancient Egyptian texts too dealt with it in their own way. It is generally considered among scholars to be an event simply alluded to by means of periphrases and euphemistic terms. But the truth is that ancient Egyptian sources are sometimes surprisingly raw when referring to this event. Of course, it is never openly written that

¹ The literature about Osiris is extremely extensive. One of the main works about the god is certainly Griffiths’s (1980) still authoritative even though opinion on some issues could be argued. Countless studies have been published on different aspect connected with the god. As for the god’s rising cult at the end of the V Dynasty at the expense of the solar religion, see the recent study by Shalomi-Hen (2015). The actual meaning of the god’s name has been long debated and the most recent study on this issue is Allen (2013), according to whom the reading *is-iri* would mean “engendering (male) principle”, in opposition to Isis’s name, which would mean “female principle”. Crucial moments of the god’s cult are festivals and mysteries. The Khoiak festivals and the mysteries of Osiris in Abydos in the Middle and New Kingdoms are discussed in Eaton (2006) and Lavie (1989), respectively. The edition of texts of the Osirian chapels of the Dendera Temple by Chassinat (1966-1968) is still the reference work, yet a more recent, almost unchanged, translation has been presented by Cauville (1997) along with a comment to the text. Important elements in rituals celebrating the rebirth of Osiris were corn mummies. The latest work on the topic is by Centrone (2009). A concise work on the relationship between Osiris and the deceased and of significant changes on the Egyptian conception of the Osirian afterlife is Smith (2014). The prominence of Osiris as a god lasted up until the end of pharaonic Egypt. On his importance in the I Millennium BC see Coulon (2013).

² For a social-political reading of both the Osirian myth and that of the conflict between Horus and Seth see the recent publication by Mathieu (2016).

Osiris was massacred, nevertheless, even though by means of indirect mentioning, texts employ terms that leave no doubt about the fact that Osiris was actually brutally murdered. A direct description of the very moment of his death has always been avoided in ancient Egypt. Nevertheless, it was recognised as something real as early as the god's appearance in literature. As a matter of fact, it was alluded to in many different ways, from epithets and periphrases up to brief and indirect allusions, among which, above all, his representation as a mummiform being. Texts deal indeed more with the consequences of the homicide than with the action itself, describing the state in which Osiris was found and the recollection of his body. Yet, the fact that the result is portrayed instead of the means implies nonetheless that the god was considered to have died.

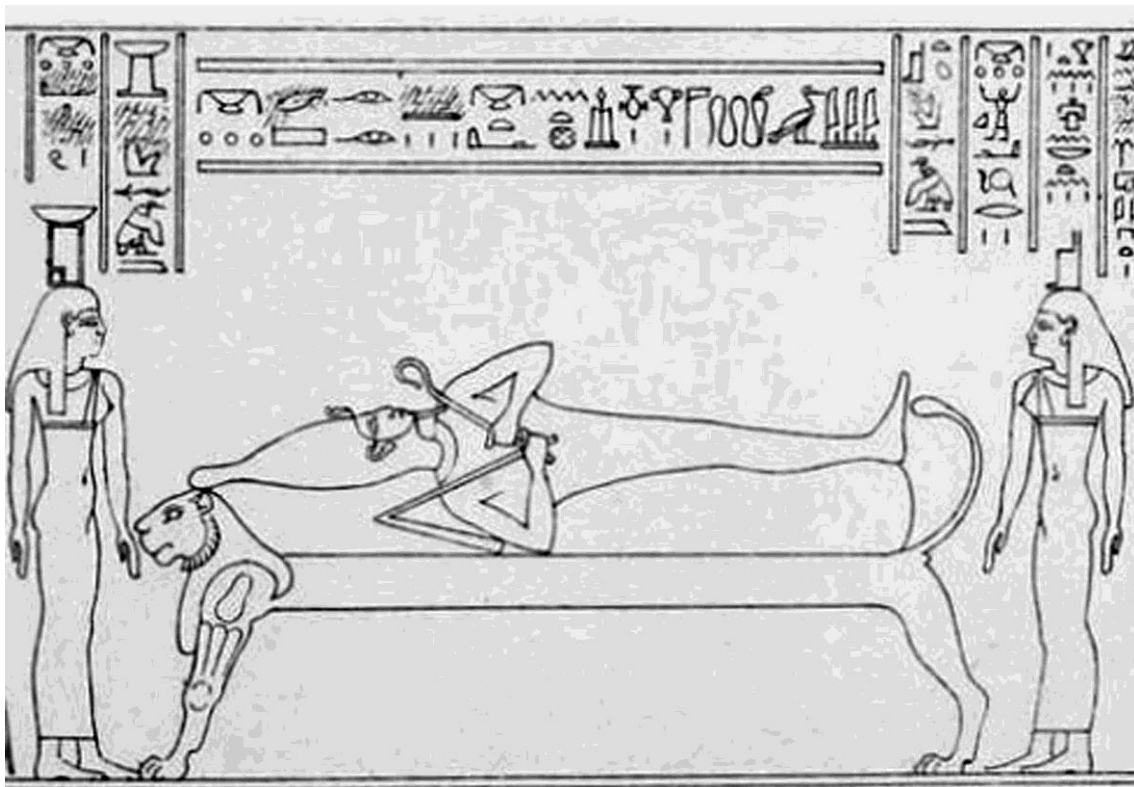


Figure 2. Relief of Osiris lying on the funerary bed as a mummiform figure from the lower register of the third Osirian chapel of the Ptolemaic temple of Dendera. Isis and Nephthys are at his feet and head respectively, protecting him. Source: Mariette, 1873, pl. 68.

The most important evidence is certainly the identification of the deceased with Osiris, a prerogative reserved to kings in the Old Kingdom but, from the First Intermediate Period on, gradually extending to private people, starting from those of the royal circle. His death was also fundamental for festivals and religious procession. In

this kind of representation, the conflict between Horus and Seth was played as a drama and Osiris's death on the bank of Nedit was of central importance in the Great procession (*pr.t* '3.t) taking place in Abydos. Nevertheless, as the stela of Ikhnofret³ (Berlin Museum 1204), high officer under Sesostri III and functionary in charge of the annual organisation of the festival seems to show, the moment of the god's murder was likely not represented. The festival consisted in the journey of a statue of Osiris from his temple to his tomb in Pequer, about two kilometres southwest of the temple and back after his resurrection. On the way of the procession, scenes concerning the myth of Osiris were depicted, possibly omitting the episode of his murder. The account of Ikhnofret actually jumps from the mention of the first appearance of the god as a living ruler to that of the repulsion of his foes and of the funeral procession to Pequer. The stela excludes Osiris's death and likely the dramatic representation did the same⁴.

That very moment was indeed considered too horrible an event to be recorded and consequently eternized in the literary and figurative documentation. Thus a linear and complete account of his death's myth was only given by the time of the Greek philosopher Plutarch (AD 40-120), at the very beginning of the second century AD, thousands of years after its appearance in the memory of the ancient Egyptians. Whereas some elements Plutarch refers to are dubious, others clearly derive from Egyptian sources. As a matter of fact, brief narrations of some of the myth's episodes – among which the struggle between Horus and Seth⁵ plays a main role – are already present in the *Pyramid Text* and then in later sources, obviously avoiding a clear depiction but also suggesting it in quite raw ways. As explained in the introduction, the aspect of a possible death by drowning of Osiris has been left out of the investigation in order to focus on the violent aspect of the death of the god.

³ The full text has been published by königliche Museen zu Berlin, 1913, p. 169-175. Additional editions are given by Schäfer, 1904; Sethe, 1959, p. 70-71. Full translation is available in Breasted, 1906, p. 297-300, §§ 661-670; Wilson, 1969b, p. 239-330; Lichtheim, 1973, p. 123-125.

⁴ Cf. Babry, 1955, p. 261.

⁵ On the conflict of the two gods in the *Pyramid Texts* see Tobin (1993). On the contrary, a work by Griffiths (1960) is an extensive investigation of three millennia of source material concerning the topic, and proposes an historical explanation of the myth as well, which according to him would depict the predynastic union of Upper and Lower Egypt.

3.1. The myth of the dead of Osiris

3.1.1. *Plutarch's version of the myth*

According to Plutarch's⁶ version of the myth, Osiris was the son of Rhea, the Egyptian Nut, and Kronos, corresponding to the Egyptian god Geb. When Helios, the Greek name of Ra, found out that his woman carrying the children of Kronos, he decreed that she was not to give birth to her child in any month or in any year. So, Hermes, matching the Egyptian god Thoth, played at table with Selene, the Moon, and, by winning the game, achieved that the seventh part of each day was to be removed from it in order to gather them together and obtain five more days that he then added to the year. During those five days Rhea delivered her children and when Osiris, the eldest, was born, a voice was heard proclaiming that he was the lord of creation. On the second day she gave birth to Horus the Elder, on the third to Typhon⁷ (i.e. Seth), who was born before term and who came out of her flank, on the fourth to Isis, and, in the end, to Aphrodite, corresponding to Nephthys. Osiris, king of Egypt, taught men agriculture, gave them laws and educated mankind to venerate the gods. Once Egypt was set, Osiris visited the rest of the world as well while, during his absence, Isis ruled Egypt. On his return, his jealous brother Typhon and his seventy-two fellows laid a trap for him. During a banquet, Typhon showed the participants a beautiful chest, shaped after having secretly measured the body of Osiris, which he would have given as a gift to whoever had fit it perfectly. When Osiris lay down in the chest, Typhon immediately slammed down the lid, fastened it with nails from the outside and poured molten lead on it to seal the chest. He then threw it into the Nile, which carried the coffin to the sea through the Tanitic Mouth. This, as Plutarch informed us, happened in the twenty-eighth year either of Osiris's life or of his reign. When Isis heard about it she cut off a lock of her hair as a sign of grief and started the search for her husband⁸. She traced it to Byblos⁹, where the

⁶ The most important study on Plutarch's *Isis and Osiris* is certainly Griffiths (1970), offering an exhaustive introduction, translation and commentary. A study on the myth as narrated by Plutarch and on the author's attitude toward the cult of Osiris has been made by Hani, 1976.

⁷ On the relationship between Seth and Typhon see Fabre, 2001.

⁸ At this point Plutarch's account relates that the young boys Isis had asked about the coffin informed her also about the child that Osiris had fathered with Nephthys, who had exposed him immediately after his birth because of her fear of Typhon. So, with the help of dogs, which led her to him, Isis searched also for the son of Osiris and Nephthys, found him, brought him up, gave him the name of Anubis, and made him her guardian and attendant.

⁹ The city is never mentioned in ancient Egyptian sources in connection with the myth.

coffin of Osiris had been led by the sea and laid among the branches of a tamarisk tree¹⁰ which, growing in size, had enclosed the chest within its trunk. The local king, impressed by the magnificence of that trunk, had it cut down and employed as a column in his palace. Isis cut the pillar open, took out the coffin and went back to Buto, where her son Horus was being reared¹¹. She hid the coffin, but, despite this, one night Typhon found it while hunting. He recognized the body, tore it into fourteen¹² pieces and scattered them in different places¹³. Isis learned of this and searched for her husband again. Every time she found a piece of Osiris's body, she built a tomb and had a funeral for it. Alternatively, according to another tradition, she made effigies of him and assigned them to several cities. In this way each part would have been honoured and Typhon might have given up finding the true tomb of Osiris when so many were considered to be the proper tomb of the god. Yet, despite her search, Isis could not find one part of Osiris's body, namely his male member¹⁴, because, once tossed into the river, the lepidotus, phragus and oxyrhyncus fish fed upon it¹⁵. So, Isis made a replica of the phallus and consecrated it. Osiris then came back¹⁶ to his son Horus and trained him for the battle against his brother Typhon. After a battle that lasted many days Horus finally defeated him. At this point, Typhon formally accused Horus of being an illegitimate child, but the gods decreed that he was legitimate. Besides, Typhon was

¹⁰ This anecdote could have a counterpart in a relief in the temple of Hathor at Dendera, depicting Osiris in a coffin among the branches of a tree (Frankfort, 1948, p. 178; Cf. Mariette, 1873, pl. 66).

¹¹ According to this version on the myth, Horus the Elder (Haroeris), the second son delivered by Nut, was actually the child of Osiris and Isis, whom they conceived in the womb of their mother before being born. On this see Quack (2004) who quotes a passage from pMMA 35.9.21 which would demonstrate that Osiris and Isis did indeed have sexual intercourse while in the womb of Nut.

¹² The same number is referred to in pJumilhac, which explains that Isis collected the dismembered limbs in twelve days, coinciding with the length of the festival of ploughing, which used to take place in the fourth month of Akhet. The text lists the part of the corpse found in each of the twelve days (III,19-20; Vandier, 1961, p.136-137). The number of the dismembered limbs actually changes in respect to different traditions and ranges from fourteen to sixteen or forty-two, as many as the nomes of Egypt.

¹³ Diodorus Siculus gave a different account. He wrote that his brother Typhoon divided the body in twenty-six pieces and gave one of them to each of his fellows because he wanted all of them to be equally guilty and supporters of his rule. The phallus, on the contrary, was thrown into the Nile by Seth since no one of the conspirator wanted to take it (Book I, 21-22).

¹⁴ On the contrary, in pJumilhac the privates of Osiris are found on the twenty-eighth day of the month in Middle Egypt and were subsequently placed in the temple of the ram. The text reports also another tradition, stating that it was the arm which was found and not the member (IV,21-22; Vandier, 1961, p.137). A second tradition states that the member was found on the twenty-fifth day in a thicket of papyrus in the Delta region (IV,16; Vandier, 1961, p.136).

¹⁵ According to another tradition it was the crocodile god Sobek who devoured it (CT 991). For this offence Isis cut out his tongue and this is why in Egyptian mythology crocodiles have no tongue.

¹⁶ For the ancient Egyptians Osiris never came back on earth from the domain of the dead, nor momentarily.

also overcome in two further battles. Then, Osiris lay with Isis and conceived a posthumous child, Harpocrates, untimely born and weak in his lower limbs¹⁷.

This is the synopsis of the myth as reported by Plutarch, who confessed to have omitted the dreadful episodes of the dismemberment of Horus and the decapitation of Isis¹⁸.

3.1.2. *The Egyptian version of the myth*

Opposite to other civilisation, ancient Egyptian literature comprises just a few mythical narratives, as for example the *Myth of Horus* inscribed in the Ptolemaic temple of Horus in Edfu or the *Myth of the destruction of Mankind* (i.e. the *Book of the Heavenly Cow*) recorded on the first of the gilded shrines of Tutankhamun and on the walls of royal tombs of the New Kingdom. Nonetheless, hymns and other kinds of religious composition incorporate episodes of myths, even though myths do not exist as literary works of their own¹⁹. This is also the case of the Osirian myth.

As we will see, the ancient Egyptian scattered non-narrative evidence, which almost resemble Plutarch's account, in various sources. At first glance, one may find oneself under the impression that Egyptian texts omit most of the details because of their great reserve towards divine death. However, if we analyse these data more carefully, we will actually find that the missing elements are just the anecdotal ones, such as the episode or the banquet of minor scenes of Isis's quest of the body²⁰, whereas the essential events are preserved, even though reluctantly alluded to.

¹⁷ Plutarch's *Moralia*, *On Isis and Osiris*, 12-19.

¹⁸ Plutarch's *Moralia*, *On Isis and Osiris*, 20. The two episode are recounted extensively in the first sixteen pages of pChester Beatty I, dating back to the reign of Ramses V. During the fight in the midst of the Nile between Horus and Seth, both transfigured in hippopotamuses, the latter begs Isis for mercy when she stabbed him with a spear. She let go of him and Horus, furious at her, grabbed his knife of sixteen *deben* and cut off his mother's head. The papyrus then narrates of how Seth tried to abuse of Horus, who stopped him. He went thus to his mother and showed her the semen of Seth that he hold in his hand. Isis shocked, took her knife, cut off his son's impure hand and tossed it into the Nile.

As for the first of these anecdotes, namely the one concerning the beheading of Isis, Plutarch notably mitigates it. He wrote that when Typhon was delivered in chain to Isis. She was merciful and did not sentence him to death but Horus, disagreeing with his mother, grabbed the royal diadem from her head. So, in exchange, Hermes, put upon her head a helmet in the shape of a cow's head.

The second anecdote has a parallel in BD 113, in which Horus is said to have his hands cut off by his mother and have them thrown in the Nile. Then, his arms (*ḥ.wy*) or hands (*ḏr.ty*) are found by the god Sobek, and Isis caused them to be grown back in their proper place. The event is briefly alluded to also in the earlier CT 158. Both spells deal with the knowledge over the *bas* of Nekhen.

¹⁹ Baines, 1996, p. 361-363. For the relation between myth and literature see also Baines, 1991.

²⁰ According to Moret, even the anecdotal episode of the coffin of Osiris, carried by the sea up to Byblos and imprisoned in the trunk of a tree which is then set on fire, would have a correspondence in ancient

The most complete ancient Egyptian account of the myth is found in a hymn to Osiris, recorded on the Stela of Amenmose²¹ (Louvre C 28; figure 3), dating back to the first half of the XVIII Dynasty²². It consists of a curved limestone stela, measuring 103 x 62 cm, with two offering scenes depicted in its lunette: on the left Amenmose, overseer of the cattle of Amun, and his wife Nefertari seat before the offering table and receive offerings from one of their son; on the right a priest is performing offering rites to the Mistress of the House Bakel, whose kinship with Amenmose is not explained. A second son stands behind Amenmose and his wife, whereas six more are portrayed in the register below. The hymn, a text of twenty-five horizontal lines, is inscribed below and can be divided into three parts: the earthly reign of the living Osiris, Isis's search for him after his death, and the final triumph of Horus over Seth which is followed by Horus's consequent succession to the rule of Egypt. The last three lines are dedicated to the offering formula.

Egyptian literature and precisely in PT 574, § 1485 ff. (Moret, 1931, p. 740). Similarly, Brunner (1975) argues for the antiquity of the episode. On the contrary, Hermann (1958) affirms that this section is not part of the ancient Egyptian myth. A completely different interpretation of the meaning of the anecdotal episode of the trunk's finding is given by Beinlich (1983, p. 65). According to him, the goddess would actually not have found the tree in which the coffin containing Osiris's body had struck, but rather the proper tree to employ as row material to carve out the coffin of her husband.

²¹ Description, hieroglyphic transcription of the text, and picture of the stela are given in Moret, 1931.

²² For a complete explanation of this date based on proper names and paleography see Moret, 1931, p. 725-726.

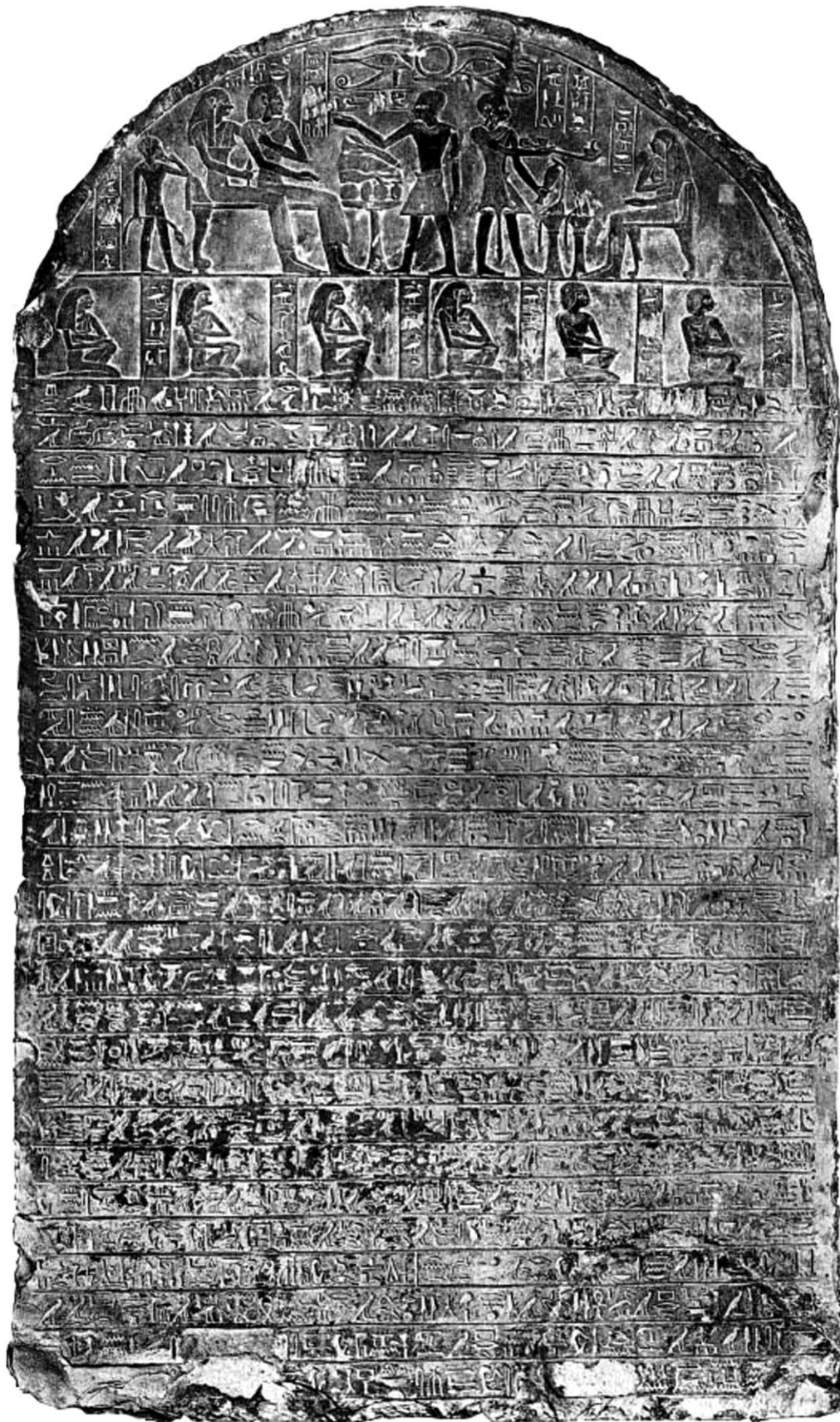


Figure 3. The stela of Amenmose (Louvre C 286) on which the Great Hymn to Osiris, the most complete ancient Egyptian account of the Osirian myth, is inscribed. Source: Moret, 1931, pl. III.

The text gives a general outline of the story, but lacks in details. As a matter of fact, the moment of Osiris's homicide by Seth is not described, being such an event too brutal and painful to be recorded in writing and consequently eternized. Even the most complete first-hand account of the myth could not break through the reserve of the ancient Egyptians. The reason is always the same, namely that of avoiding to record events considered adverse and unfavourable. The hymn particularly insists on the fact that Osiris has ruled over the livings, succeeding to his father Geb. His murder is then implied and the part that follows concerns the restoration of his body as well as the pregnancy of his wife and sister Isis. Whereas negative events are silenced, favourable episodes are narrated more exhaustively, as in the case of Horus's vindication of his father and triumph as vanquisher of Seth. Thus, between the first part (up to line 13) and the second one (from line 14), the topic changes abruptly, switching from Osiris's earthly reign to Isis's search for him. The death of Osiris should have been narrated just between the two parts but is omitted as in a "ritual gap"²³. Here is the passage concerned:

The Great Hymn to Osiris

ir-n sn.t-f m 'k.t-f shry.t hr.w

[14] *sh̄m.t sp.w šd hrw m ȝh.w rȝ-s*

ikr.t ns n whn mdw-s mnht wđ mdw

*s.t ȝh.t nđ.t sn-s h̄h.t sw iwt(y).t
b̄gg[15]-s phr.t tȝ pn m hȝy.t*

*n hn-n-s n gm tw-s sw
ir.t šw.t m šw.t-s sh̄pr.t tȝw m dnh.wy-s
ir.t hn.w mni.t sn-s*

[16] *st̄s.t nnw n wrd-ib h̄np.t mw-f ir.t
iw 'w šd.t nh̄n.w m w 'w n rh̄ bw-f im̄²⁵*

His sister has made his protection, she who drives away the enemies,

[14] she who repels the actions letting out²⁴ the word of power from her mouth, her tongue capable (of it), (her) word does not fail, she who is effective in her word of command.

Beneficial Isis, who protected her brother, who sought him without being tired [15], who went around this land mourning.

She did not rest until she found him.

She who made him shadow with her feathers, who made air with her wings, who makes jubilation for the mooring of her brother.

[16] She who raised the weariness of the weary of heart, who received his semen, who generated the heir, who suckled the child in solitude, being unknown the place where he is.

²³ It is what Moret (1931, p. 740) calls "lacune rituelle".

²⁴ Literally "removing".

²⁵ Transcription based on Moret, 1931, p. 739-743, pls. 1-2.

The fact that the most complete ancient Egyptian account of the Osirian myth has been recorded for the first time in the XVIII dynasty, does not mean that it was not alluded to hundreds of years earlier. The account of the myth as given in this stela actually follows the tradition of the Old Kingdom, as provided by the *Pyramid Texts*, even though much more allusively. The text never mentions neither the violence performed by Seth nor the dismemberment of the lifeless corpse of Osiris. The hymn evokes the image of the inert god just once, describing how his sister shaded and fanned him with her wings. As a matter of fact, the hymn is actually focused on the figure of Isis, narrating about her search, her mourning, and the conception of Horus, who is indeed the posthumous child of Osiris. The very moment of the finding of her husband's corpse is not described and Osiris is not even said to be lying on his side, a typical euphemism to mean that he has died. The text is really concise, omitting all the details of the murder, which are silenced and implicit.

New elements will actually be added to the myth in the Graeco-Roman Period, but the reticence of the great hymn to Osiris is not indicative of its more ancient composition. In fact, the earlier funerary literature, starting from the *Pyramid Texts*, will be more explicit – even though always allusive – using violent expressions to designate the murder of the god. The terminological analysis of texts dealing with the depiction of the god's death will be the central issue of the following paragraphs.

3.2. The death of Osiris in euphemistic terms

Countless are the indirect references to Osiris's murder. They comprise the mention of the effluxes coming out of the god's body, the lamentation of Isis and Nephthys, the mourning of Osiris by other gods, the gathering of the dissevered limbs, the treatment of his body by Anubis, the carrying of his corpse on the back of Seth, the revenge of Horus and the defeat of Seth, the vindication of Osiris and the slain of his enemies, the embalming of his body, and the mention of his burial. The *Pyramid Texts* in particular combine description of finding of the god's body with that of his rescue and of the lamentations of Isis and Nephthys.

In many occurrences texts refer to the various events as “the day of ...” (*ḥrw m*), in a more detached way. Thus, they allude to both the slaughtering and the burial. Besides,

kn ʿ3 and also *kn wr*, both meaning “the great misfortune/evil deed²⁶” are typical expressions to denote the murder of Osiris committed by Seth. However, they will actually be omitted in order to focus on more particular expressions.

3.2.1. *Osiris’s death described by the image of him lying on his side*

The statement that Osiris has been put or that is found lying on his side is a frequent periphrasis and appears as early as the *Pyramid Texts*. It is a typical euphemism to describe either the act of slaughtering itself or the situation in which his sisters Isis and Nephthys found him on the riverbanks of Nedit and Geheset, respectively. The image of someone lying on his side is actually an immediate depiction of the state of a dead body. It is not by chance that the funerary literature is almost saturated with invitations for the deceased to rise from his left side and put himself on the right side in order to overcome death. The position on the left flank was in fact the original pose of the mummy in the coffin and was maintained up to the introduction of the anthropoid coffin which, on the contrary, necessarily required supine position. Thus, the image of Osiris on his side is that of a lifeless corpse, a picture that could be understood immediately and which was impossible to misinterpret.

In this regard, two different descriptions coexist: the first simply stating that the god is found lying on his side²⁷; the other explaining that Osiris has been put on his side. The employment of either the former or the latter form just depends on whether the text prefers to stress the result of the action or the action itself having been performed. In many cases the verb used is *rdi*, meaning “to place” or “to put”, somehow a neutral term. On the contrary, other instances employ different verbs, in a way more explicit. In other occurrences, verbs are even lacking. In the *Pyramid Texts* the verbs used comprise *nni*, *wḏi*, *ndi* and *hr*. The choice of words is significant, not only because of the negative or neutral shade that they give to the sentence, but also because puns are made. As a matter of fact, the name of the two localities in which Osiris’s body drifted ashore make play on words with the term describing his condition: Geheset with *hr gs-f*, and Nedit with the verb *ndi*, “to fell” or “to throw down”²⁸. As for the sites mentioned, they are possibly the places in which Osiris was both found and assassinated by Seth.

²⁶ Cf. Wb 5, 48.2-8; FCD, p. 279 translates *kn* with the word “offence”.

²⁷ On the contrary, in many other instances texts are even more allusive, simply reading that Isis and Nephthys – or alternatively Horus – have found Osiris but giving no further details.

²⁸ Guilhou, 1998a.

The real location of Geheset has not been certainly identified, whereas sources place Nedit in the neighbourhood of Busiris but also near Abydos.

A few grammatical remarks can also be made. The event is generally referred to as a completed action by means of *sdm-n-f* forms in regard to both the verbs referring to the search and finding of the god's corpse and those describing the murder at the hands of Seth. The verb forms referred to Osiris, on the contrary, are generally statives, describing the state of being of the god as the result of a previous action. The state of being that they express is more important than the action that produced them. Yet, such action is simply implied since the stative does not express the action itself but only its result²⁹. A passive sentence is also attested (PT 576), with *in* introducing the agent of the action. Seth is consequently identified by name as the agent of the god's murder, namely he who placed (*wdi*) him on his flank. The attention, however, is kept on Osiris, who is indeed the subject of the sentence rather, than on Seth as a murderer. Yet, the composition shows the intention of inserting the murder in the account, even though still focusing on Osiris. The use of the passive form or of the passive suffix *-tw* (passive perfect) would actually not allow the text to insert Seth as a character.

This euphemistic depiction of Osiris's body is quite widespread throughout the *Pyramid Texts*, still used in the *Coffin Texts*, whereas it is completely absent in the *Book of the Dead*. Examples of the different combination of terms are given below, listed depending on the verb employed, starting with expression with no verbs, and proceeding with those employing *rdi*, *wdi*, *ndi*, *nni*, to conclude with *hr*.

PT 637

<i>dd-mdw ii hr mh [md.t] shn-n-f it-f wsir</i>	Words to say: Horus comes filled with oils.
<i>gm-n-f sw hr gs-f m ghs.ti</i> ³⁰	He searched for his father Osiris and found him lying on his side in Geheset.

PT 694

[...] <i>in s.t gm-n-i in nb.t-hw.t</i> <i>m33-n-sn wsir hr gs-f m i(b)d</i> [...] ³¹	[...] (said) Isis, "I found him" (said) Nephthys. They saw Osiris on his side in the riverbanks [...]
---	---

²⁹ Cf. Allen, 2010, p. 209. Statives are employed also in later compositions dealing with the overthrowing of Apophis and Seth.

³⁰ Transcription based on Sethe, 1910, p. 438, §§ 1799 a-b.

³¹ Transcription based on Sethe, 1910, p. 520, §§ 2144 a-b.

CT 74

mk ir-k gm-n(-i) tw hr gs-k wrd wr
sn.t-ı ũ.t in s.t r nb.t-ħw.t
*sn-n pw nw*³²

I have found you lying on your side, o
 great weary one.
 “My sister” said Isis to Nephthys,
 “this is our brother”.

PT 485

iy gb 3.f tp-f kni.t-f ir hr-f
iħw-f tn(.w) ipp-f h3s.wt m shnw wsir
*gm-n-f sw dy hr gs-f m ghs.t*³³

Geb comes, (his) strength on his head, his
 eyes yellow (with rage?) on his face.
 He treads the cliffs and searches the desert
 in search of Osiris.
 He found him put on his side in Geheset.

PT 576

dd mdw wd wsir hr gs-f in sn-f stš
nmnm im(.i) ndi.t ts tp-f in r‘
*bw.t-f kdd msd-f b3gi*³⁴

Words to say: Osiris has been put on his
 side by his brother Seth.
 He who is in Nedit quivers. His head is
 raised by Ra.
 His abomination is sleeping, he hates
 weariness.

PT 442

dd mdw hr r-f ti wr pw hr gs-f ndi r-f imy
*ndi.t*³⁵

Words to say: the Great One has fallen on
 his side; he has been thrown down³⁶ in
 Nedit.

PT 532

iy s.t iy nb.t-ħw.t w‘t-sn m imn.t w‘t-sn m
i3b.t
w‘t-sn m h3.t w‘t-sn m dr.t
gm-n-sn wsir
*ndi-n sw sn-f stš r t3 m ndi.t*³⁷

Isis comes, Nephthys comes, one of them
 from the west, one of them from the east,
 one of them as a sea swallow, one of them
 as a kite.
 They found Osiris,
 his brother Seth had thrown him down in
 Nedit.

³² Transcription based on De Buck, 1935, p. 306 c-e.

³³ Transcription based on Sethe, 1910, p. 78, §§ 1032 c – 1033 b.

³⁴ Transcription based on Sethe, 1910, p. 317-318, §§ 1500 a-c.

³⁵ Transcription based on Sethe, 1908, p. 454, § 819 a.

³⁶ *ndi* indeed means “to fell (someone or something)” or “to throw down” (Wb 2, 367.12-13).

³⁷ Transcription based on Sethe, 1910, p. 210, §§ 1255 c – 1256 b.

PT 478

ii-n-t(w)m hḥ sn-t(w) wsīr

ny-n sw sn-f stš ḥr gs-f

*m gs pf n ghs.t*³⁸

You have come searching for your brother
Osiris
(after) his brother Seth has cast him down
on his side
on that side of Geheset.

PT 412

*ḡd mdw iḥr(.w)*³⁹ *wr ḥr gs-f*

nmnm im(.i) ndi.t

ts tp-f in r'

*bw.t-f ḡdd msḡ-f bḡgi*⁴¹

Words to say: The Great One has fallen on
his side⁴⁰.

He who is in Nedit quivers.

His head is raised by Ra.

His abomination is sleeping, he hates
weariness.

PT 701

*ḡd mdw ḥr(.w) wr m ndi.t wh' s.t in tn-s*⁴²

Words to say: the Great One is fallen in
Nedit. Isis is loosened from her
landmark⁴³.

CT 838

*ḥr(.w) wr ḥr gs-f nmnm imi n ndi.t*⁴⁴

ts tp-k in r'

*bw(t)-f ḡdd ms(ḡ)-k bḡg...*⁴⁶

The Great One is fallen on his side, he who
is in Nedit moves back and forth⁴⁵.

Your head is raised by Ra.

Your abomination is sleeping, you hate
weariness.

³⁸ Transcription based on Sethe, 1910, p. 44, §§ 972 a-c.

³⁹ In Teti's version the verb *ḥr* is written with the determinative of sacrificial animal.

⁴⁰ PT 667 §2018a, which reads practically the same, refers instead to the deceased king:

ḡd-mdw ḥr wr ḥr gs-f 'h' ntr is.

“Words to say: a great one has fallen on his side. He stands up like a god.”

⁴¹ Transcription based on Sethe, 1908, p. 395, §§ 721 a-d.

⁴² Transcription based on Sethe, 1910, p. 532, § 2188 a.

⁴³ According to Sethe (1936a, p. 314) it likely has reference to the birth of Horus and Isis's deliverance from her burden. On the contrary, Allen intends *s.t* not as the goddess' name but rather as “place” and consequently translates: “the place (where it happened) was disowned by its mountain-range” (2005, p. 301).

⁴⁴ *ndi.t* has the additional determinative of water.

⁴⁵ The very beginning of CT 839 is identical.

⁴⁶ Transcription based on De Buck, 1961, p. 40 a-c.

The choice of the verb *hr* (“to fall”) is very interesting if we consider it in the wider context of the later literature⁴⁷. From the New Kingdom on, it will be used indeed to describe the defeat of Apophis who, as enemy of Ra, must be defeated. The serpent god is ideally condemned to suffer second death and some texts are extremely raw in regard to the tortures inflicted upon him. Nonetheless, in other instances in which sources do not seem to be intended to focus primarily on the struggle, as in solar hymns, the temporary death of Apophis is referred to by means of the verb *hr*. The stative form of the verb is used to underline his state of being indeed. The same is also attested in regard to Seth. This is clearly a euphemism, yet the examples of Seth and Apophis are opposed to that of Osiris. Whereas for the evil gods annihilation is truly meant, in the case of Osiris the image of the god lying on his side is recalled. We could almost intend it literally – even though there is no reference to his falling – namely that the god collapsed to the ground waiting for his sisters or son to find him and restore his body. Similarly, in a remark from the text of column 137 of the Middle Kingdom *Dramatic Ramesseum Papyrus* (Papyrus Ramesseum B, BM EA 10610) Osiris is designated as *wsir hr*⁴⁸, “Osiris, the fallen one”, stative form (the ending .*w* is omitted) of the verb *hr*. The epithet also occurs in column 50, this time without the god’s name supplementing it. Yet, in the previous columns he is addressed as “Osiris the mourned one” (*wsir rmi*)⁴⁹. The combination of the verb *hr* with the specification of the resting position of his side is not attested in relation to Osiris. However, it occurs by borrowing images, terminology and symbolical meaning in the Ptolemaic Period *Ritual for Causing the Downfall of Seth and his Followers* referred to condemnation to death of Seth⁵⁰.

Some scholars maintain that Seth was explicitly depicted as the murderer of Osiris from the time of the *Coffin Texts* and the Middle Kingdom only⁵¹. In fact, utterances PT 532 and PT 576 demonstrate the exact opposite. The latter describes the act of killing Osiris even though just by means of a euphemism, a fact that actually applies to the later literature as well. The former is more explicit, setting the action in a defined place, namely Nedit, and employing a verb with a stronger meaning, compared to the “neutral” expression by omitting the verb or by using *rdi*. Moreover, in PT 478 we find both the use of a verb denoting violence (*ni*) and the identity of the murder,

⁴⁷ It also occurs in BD 80 in which the passive form of the verb is used. See p. 114-115.

⁴⁸ Cf. Geisen, 2012, p. 171.

⁴⁹ Cf. Geisen, 2012, p. 91.

⁵⁰ See p. 208-209.

⁵¹ Nicholson, Shaw, p. 241; Hart, p. 117.

cited not only as Osiris's brother but also by name. Thus, the dynamics of the god's assassination are well-established and defined as soon as the appearance of the Osirian myth in ancient Egyptian literature.

3.2.2. *Osiris as a sleeping god*

Chronologically preceding the image of the weary god, the most recurrent one in regard to the dead Osiris, is the conception of his death as sleep. It appears as early as the myth itself in the *Pyramid Texts*. Utterance PT 413 reads that the god has fallen asleep. The stative form of both verbs underlines that this is the state of being in which Osiris is, i.e. lifeless but imagined as if sleeping.

PT 413

*sḏr r-f wr pn ib3n r-f*⁵² This Great One has spent the night being asleep.

The verb *b3n* has a negative connotation, in opposition to other verbs meaning also “to sleep” but having a different shade of meaning, such as *kd*, that denotes a kind of sleep from which someone can still awake⁵³. The verb *sḏr*⁵⁴ is similarly a well-known euphemism for “to die”⁵⁵ and it is not by chance that the dead are also called “the sleeping ones”.

Utterance PT 417 is slightly more suggestive, possibly alluding to the fact that the god is resting in his coffin. The expression *ḥr mw.t-f* is explained in § 658c, which describes the sky as a great bed⁵⁶ (*mnm.t-wr.t*). If we consider this, PT 417 could depict the god lying in his bier⁵⁷ or at least on a funerary bed⁵⁸.

⁵² Transcription based on Sethe, 1908, p. 402, §735a.

⁵³ On the opposition of *b3n* and *kd* see Zandee, 1960, p. 82 and p. 85.

⁵⁴ On the verb *sḏr* see Zandee, 1960, p. 84-85.

⁵⁵ Wb 4, 391.20-21.

⁵⁶ The determinative is indeed that of a couch or bed.

⁵⁷ On this interpretation see Mercer, 1952b, p. 322 and 370.

⁵⁸ This is a well-known element in the iconographic record of the Graeco-Roman Period temples, in which the ceremonies of the mysteries of Osiris used to be celebrated. The reliefs of the temple of Dendera exemplify it, depicting the god lying mummified or necked on a funerary bed.

PT 417

*ḏḏ mdw sḏr wr ḥr mwt-f nw.t*⁵⁹

Words to say: the great one is asleep on his mother Nut.

In the same way, also PT 468 states that the Great One has fallen asleep, a clear euphemism for death, as underlined by the mention of the god's ka. At the same time, since part of the spell consists of a resurrection text, he is also said to be awake, a clear allusion to Osiris being in the realm of the dead, but not being deceased and suffering the so called "second death".

PT 468

*ḏḏ-mdw wrš wr ḥr k3-f ib3n r-f wr pn ḥr k3-f*⁶⁰

Words to say: this Great One is awake by his ka, this Great One lies asleep by his ka⁶¹.

The representation of death as sleep is indeed very common, as well as the many encouragements addressed to the deceased for him to wake up, namely to resurrect. Similar to the idea of sleep is the concept of silence. A second one quite recurrent in the *Book of the Dead* is "Silent One" (*igr*), being silence one of the characteristic of death. It is no accident that from the XVIII Dynasty the necropolis, the reign of the dead, is indeed called "Land of Silence"⁶² (*igr.t*). Osiris is thus the "Lord of Silence". Similarly he is also the "Foremost of the Westerners" (*ḥnty-ḥmn.tyw*) and "Lord of the Netherworld" (*nswt dw3.t*). Other and even more common expressions denote him as the ruler of the west and of death. Yet, not all the expressions connect him to death. His designation as "Lord of eternity" (*nb nḥḥ* or *nb ḏ.t*), "ruler of eternity" (*ḥk3 ḏ.t*), "Lord of life" (*nb nḥ*), or "He who is always perfect" (*wnn-nfr*), for example, underline his resurrection, even though the god is confined to the Netherworld. However, these epithets are clearly euphemistic.

⁵⁹ Transcription based on Sethe, 1908, p. 405, §741a.

⁶⁰ Transcription based on Sethe, 1908, p. 499, §894a.

⁶¹ The following paragraph of the spell is referred to the deceased king, employing the same terminology.

⁶² Wb 1, 141.3-5; Zandee, 1960, p. 93.

3.2.3. Osiris as a weary god

Conceptually analogous to the idea of sleep is that of tiredness. However, it appears somehow softened since apparently weariness does not imply the characteristic motionlessness of sleep, which on the contrary closely recalls the inertia of death.

An interesting image of the tiredness of Osiris is given in the Ramesseum Dramatic Papyrus in which Horus asks Geb: “embrace for (me) this father of (mine) who is tired compared to (me)”⁶³. In this case the verb used is *nni*.

However, the most widespread designation to denote the dead Osiris is *wrd-ib*, “the weary-hearted”. The verb *wrd*⁶⁴, typically meaning “to be tired” or “to become weary”, appears obviously as a synonym of “to die” in the *Debate between a Man and His Soul*. In column 153 the ba says to the man that that he will alight after the latter’s wariness, namely death (*hny-i r-s3 wrd-k*)⁶⁵. The expression “to be tired of heart” is regarded indeed as a euphemism for passing away. As an epithet of Osiris, it appears for the first time in the *Coffin Texts*⁶⁶ and becomes even more popular by the time of *Book of the Dead*⁶⁷, throughout which it recurs often. This epithet is found almost everywhere, not only in funerary literature, in hymns and liturgies, but also for example in the harper’s song of king Antef. It fits perfectly in hymns and prayers addressed to the god, in which Osiris is exalted for his might and not lamented for his murder. Identical to this is also the definition of “the weary one” (*wrd*). Similar in this sense is “the ka at rest” (*k3 htp*), designating both Osiris and the deceased king in the *Pyramid Texts*⁶⁸. A further example is the appellation as a tired god, who is expected to awake⁶⁹. Besides, since sleepiness is a transitory condition, such image fits perfectly in ancient Egyptian conceptions about death and resurrection. An example of this is the beginning of CT 470.

⁶³ [102] *hr gb dd mdw kn n(-i) it(-i) pn nn r(-i)*. This interpretation of Horus suggesting Geb to take care of Osiris in the earth has been proposed by Geiser (cf. 2012, p. 140 and 142, note F), in opposition to Sethe’s understanding.

⁶⁴ On this term see Zandee, p. 82.

⁶⁵ Cf. Allen, 2011, p. 196.

⁶⁶ CT 74, CT 237, CT 239, CT 297, CT 327, CT 755, CT 1130.

⁶⁷ BD, 1, BD 18, BD 64, BD 145, BD 146 d-f, BD 152 b, BD 155, BD 168A c, BD 181 d, BD 182, BD 183 b, BD 185A, BD 185K, BD 168.

⁶⁸ PT 219, PT 356, PT 360. Alternatively, *k3 htp* can be translated “satisfied ka”.

⁶⁹ PT 690, §2092a: *dd mdw rs wsir nhs ntr ibgy*, “Wake up Osiris! Let the god who is tired be awake!” The sentence refers to the deceased king, addressed as Osiris, as §2092c demonstrates, in which the name of the pharaoh is reported instead as that of the god.

CT 470

hd-t3 nhs sdr
*imy-b3g im ndi.t hr- 'wy*⁷⁰

At dawn, awakes he who sleeps
 and who is in weariness straightaway in Nedit.

Moreover, *imy-b3g* (“he who is in weariness”) it a very characteristic epithet of Osiris in the *Coffin Texts*. The expression “to be tired” (*wrd*) denotes the god as sleepy and fatigued, indeed a representation of deadly inertia. Fearing this inactivity, the *Book of the Dead* contains a formula for not rotting in the necropolis, in which the deceased rejects the inactivity of death, declaring that he is Osiris and that his limbs will consequently not be weary. In other words, this means that he will revive. In this instance, the death of Osiris is practically rejected since the god has been revitalized escaping the inertia of death and living eternally as a ruler in the Netherworld.

BD 45

wrd sp 2 m wsir
wrd 't m wsir
n wrd-s n h3w-s
n d3-s n b[n-s]
*[ir] mi ink wsir*⁷¹

He who is weary is weary as Osiris.
 Is a member weary as Osiris?
 It has not grown weary, it has not putrefied;
 it has not trembled, it has not escaped.
 [Do] likewise because I am Osiris.

The depiction of Osiris as a fatigued god is recurrent in literature and does not disappear in later times. On the contrary it is still present in the liturgies of the Graeco-Roman Period. In the *Songs of Isis and Nephthys* we read indeed that Osiris’s body was weary when embalmed⁷². Similarly, in the *Stundenwachen*, inscribed on the walls of the Ptolemaic temples, his finding is described as follows:

Stundenwachen: sixth hour of the night

*ii-n-i m hhi gm-i (?) wrd*⁷³

I came and searched (literally “went”) and
 found the weary one.

⁷⁰ Transcription based on De Buck, 1954, p. 398 i-j.

⁷¹ Transcription based the papyrus of Nu; Budge, 1899, pl. 10.

⁷² [1,25] [*wrdw*] *h 'w-f m nw h-f*, “His body was weary when it was bandaged”. The word is restored but is almost certain; cf. Faulkner, 1933, p. 3, notes f-g.

⁷³ Junker, 1910, p. 118, §76.

Stundenwachen: third hour of the night

gm i3hw isk (?) sw wrd
*hm-n-f d.t-f*⁷⁴

The *i3hw* was found, he was weary.
He did not know his body.

Moreover, in this passage, the second sentence is very likely an expression to describe him as deceased. The expression also occurs in PT 688 (§2083d), a spell which in its opening deals with the ascension of the deceased king to heaven, followed by a brief negative confession. The statement that “he does not know his body in one of the two seasons of Khepri⁷⁵” is an addition disconnected with the rest of the spell, as well as the line immediately preceding it. Its real meaning is still obscure. However, this expression is clearer in the *Book of Overthrowing Apophis*. After having been physically tortured, having had his head cut off, his bones cut down, his flesh beaten, and his soul split apart from his shadow, Apophis is said indeed not to know his body (31,26). After such an accurate description of the massacre of Apophis, *hm d.t-f* must necessarily be in connection with the idea of death and consequent inertness. Body awareness is certainly one of the key aspects of life – if not even the main one – hence its absence can only mean death.

The term “weary” is also used in reference not to Osiris as a whole being but to his flesh in particular. The statement that the god’s flesh is weary – a clear metaphor for death of course – is found in the *Book of Glorification* (*md3.t nt s3hw*)⁷⁶, the most complete copy of which is inscribed on columns 10-23 of the Sękowski Papyrus⁷⁷ (Papyrus Crakow 03.03.1992), now in Jagiellonian University Library in Cracow. The funerary papyrus has been dated to the Roman Period on the basis of paleographical analysis of the hieratic script. The composition was supposed to be recited in “every occasion of the embalming place”, namely in rituals during which the mummification and resurrection of Osiris were performed, as well as in the course of other feasts. The statement interesting us is a line in spell three (columns 20,5-22,7) out of the four

⁷⁴ Junker, 1910, p. 89, §§ 45-46.

⁷⁵ §§2083c-d: *sgr-n-f m grh n wrš-n-f*

i3hm-f d.t-f m w' tr.w n hpr

“He has not slept during the night (even though) he did not keep watch.

He does not know his body in one of the two seasons of Khepri”.

⁷⁶ An introduction to the composition along with a full English translation is given in Smith, 2009, p. 167-177.

⁷⁷ The papyrus was composed for Nes-Min so of Ankh-Hap and Ta-dis-Amun-opet. Something interesting of him is that he bears the unusual title of *gsty n pr imn*, attested nowhere else; cf. Herbin, 2004, p. 171.

individual glorification utterances which makes up the composition. Parallels and variants of the four incantations are also completely or partially preserved on the walls of a temple erected in the Ptolemaic Period (watch-hour in the temple of Edfu) and in six other papyri⁷⁸. In particular, the statement about the dead Osiris also occurs in pBerlin 3057 (pSchmitt), pBritish Museum EA 10252⁷⁹, pBritish Museum EA 10317⁸⁰, and the papyrus of *Psmṯk* (pAsasif 7)⁸¹.

Book of Glorification

<i>šm-f is hr rd.wy nk3-f</i> ⁸² <i>m tbw.ty-f</i>	He walks on his legs, walking(?) in his sandals.
<i>sbk</i> ⁸³ <i>-n sw if-f gb</i>	His father Geb has made him bright.
<i>pr-n sw mw.t-f nw.t</i>	His mother Nut has equipped him.
<i>m33-tn sw ir.t r-f</i>	See him and what has been done to him.
<i>wrd iw-f nn mn-sn</i> ⁸⁴	His flesh is weary (but) it is not ill.

A metaphor such as that quoted above practically consists in admission and denial of the god's death at the same time. Illness is actually an allusion to the decomposition process affecting the corpse after passing. The text acknowledges that Osiris is dead, euphemistically depicted as a tired being, but also assures that he will not suffer annihilation ("second death"), as he has been properly embalmed. Consequently he will not know decomposition and will be granted his eternal afterlife.

3.2.3. Osiris's death as a departure

The death of Osiris is also euphemistically described by means of the image of death as a departure to the West, using periphrases that would be appropriate for deceased people in general.

⁷⁸ For the complete references see Smith, 2009, p. 168.

⁷⁹ The papyrus has been recently dated by Verhoeven (2001, p. 75-80) to 307-306 BC, Alexander IV, year 11. Previously the papyrus had been alternatively dated to Nektanebo I, year 17 by Schott (1929, p. 2-3).

⁸⁰ The synoptic edition of the papyri listed so far is given in Szczudłowska, 1972. The author labels pBritish Museum EA 10317 as pSalt 1821(A). The passage at issue is found at p. 61 and p. 66-67.

⁸¹ Published in Burkard, 1986, p. 38-41, pls. 35-36; Burkard, 1995, p. 111-129 and specifically p. 112-113.

⁸² pBerlin 3057 has *ng3* ("to kill", "to break out"). Szczudłowska thus translates: "Verily, he goes upon his feet for he has broken out with his two soles" (1972, p. 61). In opposition to this, Burkard intends the verb as a motion verb, which the context would demand, translating: "Siehe, er geht auf seinen beiden Füßen, er <läuft(?)> in seinen beiden Sandalen" (1995, p. 112 and cf. also note 12).

⁸³ A later spelling of *sb3k*; cf. Wb 4, 86 and 94.

⁸⁴ Transcription after the synoptic edition by Szczudłowska, 1972, p. 66-67.

In PT 505 the death of Osiris is alluded to as mooring according to the fact that it was necessary to cross the Nile River to bury the deceased in the West.

PT 505

<i>nw.t dī-s ʿwy-s ir-k mī nw ir-n-s n wsīr</i>	Nut gives you her arms as she has done for Osiris
<i>hrw pw mni-n-f im</i> ⁸⁵	the day that he landed there.

PT 505 is made up of three parts: the first is an old ascension text, the second is a ferryman text, whereas the third concerns the arrival of the deceased in heaven. The passage proposed above belongs to the first section. Here, Nut receives the deceased king, as she has done with her son. The king is actually not identified with Osiris, but simply compared to him. The verb *mni* (“to land”) is clearly a euphemism for “to die”⁸⁶. Such a connotation became common since the time of the *Pyramid Texts* and the expression *hrw mni-n-f* means thus typically “the day when he died”⁸⁷. So, even though we do not interpret this spell literally, it is a clear statement that Osiris has died, even though in euphemistic terms. However, this action is acknowledged as something happened due to the complete aspect of the *sdm-n-f* form of the verb *mni*.

Spell CT 50 writes about Osiris that he has come safely to the West.

CT 50

<i>rš hr hnt.y hm m wsīr wnn-nfr i m htp</i>	Horus, foremost of Letopolis, rejoices when he sees Osiris Wenennefer coming in peace to the West,
<i>r imn.t</i>	every god in his suite.
<i>ntr nb.w m šms.w-f</i> ⁸⁸	

Stating that Osiris actually died in peace is quite contradictory, considering the circumstances of his death, but it perfectly fits the periphrases, describing death as a journey ending in the necropolis. Moreover, the fact that his body has been properly embalmed necessarily results in a serene afterlife along with the fact that he has been

⁸⁵ Transcription based on Sethe, 1910 p. 103-104, §§ 1090 e-f.

⁸⁶ Wb 2, 73.22; Zandee, 1960, p. 53.

⁸⁷ Wb 2, 74.3.

⁸⁸ Transcription based on De Buck, 1935, p. 224 c-e.

avenged. Other times, even though dealing with euphemistic expressions, the identity of Osiris is simply implied by the context. An example is CT 60, employing the well-known euphemism of descending into the necropolis.

CT 60

<i>h3 ntr r hr.t-ntr</i>	(when) the god descends in the necropolis
<i>ib-f ndm</i>	he is joyful,
<i>hr m nsw.t ir-n-f n-f sz-mry-f</i> ⁸⁹	(because) Horus is king, having acted as his beloved son.

The fact that Osiris is simply designated as “the god” (*ntr*) demonstrate also that the ancient Egyptians were familiar with his myth and so additional details were likely superfluous. The readers could immediately understand what the text was talking about.

Another term depicting death as a departure is *šm* (“to go away”) in marked contrast to *iw/ii* (“to come”) meaning also to resurrect and surviving after the earthly departure⁹⁰. As a euphemism, it is found in the *Songs of Isis and Nephthys*, in which Osiris is said to be a child who has departed untimely. This means both that his death came unexpected, as in the case of a child who ideally expected the proverbial lifespan of 110 years⁹¹, and that it was unfair. Indeed, it was not a “natural” divine death, but a violent one, i.e. a murder.

The Songs of Isis and Nephthys

<i>hwn.w nfr šm n(?) nw</i> ⁹²	Oh, perfect child who departed not in due time.
---	---

<i>šm hn.w nn nw</i> ⁹³	The child goes away not in due time.
------------------------------------	--------------------------------------

⁸⁹ Transcription based on De Buck, 1935, p. 251 d-f.

⁹⁰ On the verb *šm* as a synonym of “to die” see Zandee, 1960, p. 54-56.

⁹¹ Cf. *The Instruction of Ptah-hotep* in which we read: “may you obtain (many) years of life! Not small is what I did on earth, I had one hundred and ten years of life as a gift of the king” (translation by Lichtheim, 1973, p. 76).

⁹² Faulkner, 1933, p. 2, 1,14.

⁹³ Faulkner, 1933, p. 12, 6,18.

The composition records a second periphrasis to describe the god's passing away in § 8,3. Once again, his departure is described as a journey, in this case specifying that the destination is the sacred land, i.e. the necropolis. The passage reads as follows:

The Songs of Isis and Nephthys

nswt-bi.ty nb wd3 r t3 dsr.tt

Oh, king of Upper and Lower Egypt; oh, Lord,
gone to the necropolis,

*iw nn sp-k mh-n-i ib im-f*⁹⁴

there was no matter of yours which I could trust.

A similar composition, in connection with the mysteries of Osiris, is the *Lamentations of Isis and Nephthys* (pBerlin 3008). The work used to be performed in temples consecrated to Osiris on certain feast days, recreating the death of the god, as well as his resurrection. Here, Osiris is addressed as if he were still alive, implored by his sister not to depart from her⁹⁵. The composition should be considered in connection with the *Songs of Isis and Nephthys* and the *Stundenwachen*, but unlike these two the *Lamentations of Isis and Nephthys* is much more allusive. Indirect references to Osiris's death are made just by the mention of his sisters and the sons of Horus guarding his body and bier (*nmi.t*⁹⁶), by that of gods and men weeping for him, by the defeat of his enemy, and by his designations as “weary of heart” and as “vindicated” (*m3' hrw*⁹⁷). In the *Stundenwachen* Osiris is also addressed to as one who is alone (*sdm-f* form of the verb *w'i*⁹⁸), a term that thus can be intended as “to abandon”, “to leave” and consequently “to die”. Alternatively, it can describe Osiris's condition in the moment immediately following his murder, when his corpse has not yet been found and consequently properly embalmed.

⁹⁴ Faulkner, 1933, p. 14, 8,3.

⁹⁵ [2,3] *nn 3b-k r-i*, “You shall not depart from me”. Similarly [5,6] *hn.w nfr nn 3b r-s*, “Perfect child, you shall not depart from her” and *sn nfr nn 3b r-s*, “Perfect brother, you shall not depart from her”. With a different verb but with same meaning: [2,10] *nn hr-k r-i*. “You shall not be far from me”.

⁹⁶ Term used mainly in regard to Osiris (Wb 2, 266.2).

⁹⁷ It indicates that the divine tribunal has recognized his regal rights which were actually claimed by Seth. On this expression, its origin and its relationship to Osiris see Athens, 1954.

⁹⁸ In his edition Junker (1910) translates the verb *w'i* with “verelassen” (“to leave”, “to abandon”). This verb occurs quite often throughout the text:

hwt-n n w'i-f (§167, p. 77). “We lament because he is alone (i.e. he left)”

w'i-sn n w'i-k (§169, p. 77). Junker translates: “und sind traurig, daß du verlassen bist”.

rmi-i n w'i-k (§84, p. 92). “I cry because you are alone (i.e. you have left)”.

hh-i n w'i-k (§98, p. 92). “I lament because you are alone (i.e. you are lost)”.

i3kb-n n w'i-k (§110, p. 129). “Let us weep because he is alone (i.e. he left).”

hh-i n w'i-f (§86, p. 119). “I lament because he is alone (i.e. he left)”.

3.2.3. Osiris's death as a suffering

Another category of expressions is that in which texts describe the god as being wounded and suffering instead of being lifeless. In this way Osiris's death is mitigated, possibly suggesting that he could physically survive. It is actually a means to deny his decease.

PT 535

<i>hms(.tī) s.t 'wy-s tp-s</i>	Isis is seated, her arms on her head.
<i>nb.t-ḥw.t inḏr-n-s n-s mnd.wy-sny n</i>	Nephthys has seized the tip of her breasts ⁹⁹ for
<i>sn-sn ppi</i>	their brother Pepi.
<i>inp hr ḥ.t-f wsīr m sw.t-f inpw hnt(i)</i>	Lying down ¹⁰¹ on his belly, Osiris is in his
<i>3mm¹⁰⁰</i>	wound; Anubis with the grasp frontward ¹⁰² .

The term *sw.t* can both mean “wound” or “danger” but, regardless of the translation that we choose, the sense of the sentence does not change¹⁰³. The message that the text conveys is that Osiris has not died. Utterances PT 461 and PT 466, similar to each other, depict Osiris in *s.t 'wy-f*, an expression which can be translated with “in his activity¹⁰⁴” or with “in his suffering”. The term *s.t-* is actually a designation for illness¹⁰⁵. If we give the second connotation to the sentence, we obtain again a euphemism for the very moment in which Osiris passed away.

PT 461

<i>sbḥ n-k s.t ḏsw n-k nb.t-ḥw.t</i>	Isis cries out for you, Nephthys calls to you.
<i>ḥw n-k mni.t wr.t</i>	The great <i>mni.t</i> strikes evil for you.
<i>wsīr is m s.t- 'wy-f¹⁰⁶</i>	Osiris is in his suffering/activity.

⁹⁹ The actions performed by the two goddesses correspond to mourning.

¹⁰⁰ Transcription based on Sethe, 1910, p. 220, §§ 1281b – §1282b.

¹⁰¹ *inp*, which Sethe recognized as a verb, refers to Pepi and indicates jackal-like position. Mercer, on the contrary, reads “Anubis” (1952a, p. 211).

¹⁰² As Allen notes, the expression refers to Anubis's recumbent position as a jackal (2005, p. 201).

¹⁰³ Cf. Wb 4, 59.18. As an example of the first shade of meaning, Mercer translates: “Osiris being wounded” (1952a, p. 211); whereas Allen renders the sentence: “Osiris is in his danger” (2005, p. 102).

¹⁰⁴ Allen, 2005, p. 123, 224.

¹⁰⁵ Wb 1, 157.5.

¹⁰⁶ Transcription based on Sethe, 1908, p. 487, § 872a-c.

*sbḥ n-k mni.t wr.t wsir is m s.t- 'wy-f*¹⁰⁷

The great *mni.t* cries out to you, as (to) Osiris in his suffering.

3.2.4. The use of epithets

To obviate direct descriptions of the murder of Osiris, epithets were a very common and practical way to indicate his assassination, eluding the matter. Precisely, they just hint to the state in which Osiris is as a deceased, without the commitment of describing the terrible event which resulted in this condition. In fact, over time, allusions to the episode of the myth are less frequent in the funerary literature, as opposed to the *Pyramid Texts* which, on the contrary, reported more often brief passages of the myth. As a consequence epithets became more common.

Contrary to those listed in the paragraph above, others explicitly refer to his murder, his burial and his body. The ones referring to his death are, for instance: “the downcast” (*ndy*), found in the *Pyramid Texts*; the “august mummy” (*s 'h šps*); “He who is in his bier¹⁰⁸” (*hry wtyw-f*); “the dismembered One¹⁰⁹” (*tštš*); and “the fallen one” (*hr*), occurring in the *Dramatic Ramesseum Papyrus*¹¹⁰.

On the other hand, additional epithets refer to the god almost denying his death. A typical appellation is “He who stands and does not become weary¹¹¹” (*h ' n wrd-n-f*) or, similarly, the mention of the fact that the god hates being tired and sleeping¹¹².

3.3. The death of Osiris in explicit terms

3.3.1. Osiris's death described by means of verbs denoting violence

As if they were two sides of the same coin, periphrases and more explicit descriptions of the god's death coexist next to each other. The murder of the god, in

¹⁰⁷ Transcription based on Sethe, 1908, p. 493, § 884b.

¹⁰⁸ BD 168.

¹⁰⁹ CT 314; BD 1; Mythological Manual Florence PS inv. I 72, 3,5, Osing, Rosati, 1998, p. 145. Likely deriving from the verb *tštš*, “to pound”, “to hack to pieces” (Wb 5, 330.5-10) and referring to the state in which the god is found and wrapped in bandages.

¹¹⁰ See p. 97.

¹¹¹ PT 437, PT 483, PT 532, PT 610.

¹¹² For instance, PT 412, §721d: *bw.t-f kdd msd-f b3gi*, “His detestation is to sleep; he hates to be tired”.

fact, is not only referred to by means of softened images but it is also alluded to with cruel terms. Since the time of the *Pyramid Texts*, indeed, sources actually emphasize the brutal and ferocious aspect of his murder. In this case, however, texts, never mention that it is suffered by Osiris. Texts in facts describe it in a veiled way.

The expedient is a comparison: Horus does to Seth exactly what Seth has done to his father. In this way, indirectly referring to Seth's crime, the Egyptian felt more at ease mentioning the beating of the god. Moreover, in most occurrences, the name of Osiris – as well as Seth's – is silenced, but their identity is easily deducible. The two gods are called by name only in CT 303, whereas in BD 173 the speaker identifies himself with Horus. Examples date as early as the *Pyramid Texts* and are found up to the *Book of the Dead*, where this tradition occurs slightly modified. Provisional data testifies two occurrences of spell BD 173, one from a mid- to late XVIII Dynasty papyrus and the other from a Ramesside Period papyrus¹¹³. The examples are quoted below:

PT 482

ḥ' m3-k nn ḥ' sdm-k nn
ir-n n-k s3-k ir-n n-k hr

hw-f¹¹⁴ hw tw k3s-f k3s tw¹¹⁵

Stand up and see this, stand up and listen to this,
to what your son has done for you, to what
Horus has done for you.

He strikes him who has struck you; he binds him
who has bound you.

PT 606

n ink is hr nd-it-f hwi-n(-i) n-k hwi
tw¹¹⁶

For I am Horus, protector of his father, I have
struck for you he who struck you.

CT 16-17

snhm-n-f nmt.wt sm3 (i)t-f¹¹⁷

He (i.e. Horus) stopped¹¹⁸ the strides of him
who slaughtered his father.

¹¹³ Cf. Quirke, 2013, p. 413.

¹¹⁴ Neith's version has *sdm-n-f* forms both for *hwi* and *k3s*.

¹¹⁵ Transcription based on Sethe, 1910, p. 65, §§ 1007 a-c.

¹¹⁶ Transcription based on Sethe, 1910, p. 390, § 1685 a.

¹¹⁷ Transcription based on De Buck, 1935, p. 52 a.

¹¹⁸ Literally "caused to be taken away".

Papyrus Ramesseum B (Dramatic Ramesseum Papyrus)

[32] *hr wsir dd mdw hw-n-(-i) n-k* Horus spoke words to Osiris: I have stroke for
*hwi.w kw*¹¹⁹ you those who stroke you.

CT 303

it-i wsir m-k wi ii.kwi hr-k O, my father Osiris, behold, I have come to you.
hwi-i n-k stš I have struck Seth for you;
sm3-n-i sm3wt-f I have killed those who killed you;
iw hwi-n-i ihw tw I have struck those who stroke you;
*kn-n-i knw tw*¹²⁰ I have killed those who killed you.

BD 173

h3 wsir ink sz-k hr ii-n-i Oh, Osiris! I am your son Horus. I have come
*sm3-i nkn n-k*¹²¹ to kill him who wounded you.

In the case of BD 173, contrary to the spells quoted above, the verbs referring to the punishment of Seth and to the assassination of Osiris are different. The latter has the suffered action notably mitigated, defining his killing just as bodily damage. Nonetheless, it indicates a torture and a violent action as demonstrated in CT 50, in which Seth's indeed menaces to harm (*nkn*) but also to slaughter his rival¹²². Yet, when compared with the examples from the *Pyramid* and *Coffin Texts*, the earlier utterances were definitely more brutal, especially CT 303, which lists no less than four verbs denoting violence and which culminate with *kn*, meaning indeed “to kill”.

We will now temporarily switch category and leave this “comparison technique” for a while. We will find, after some other examples, an enlarged vocabulary of verbs to which a symbolical meaning is even attributed. In other instances, however, the identity of Osiris is made clear by writing his name. In CT 837 both the dead god and his murderer figure, and the spell also sets the action in a defined time and place, namely in the “palace of the Great Prince which is in On” when (preposition *m*) Seth executed his crime. This narrative setting stresses once again the fact that the death of Osiris was regarded as something which has indeed ideally occurred.

¹¹⁹ Geisen, 2012, p. 72 and 277.

¹²⁰ Transcription based on De Buck, 1951, p. 56 c-g.

¹²¹ Quirke, 2013, p. 431.

¹²² See p. 114.

CT 105

*iw dr-n-i n-k nm wsir m grh-f*¹²³

I drove away from you he who slaughtered
Osiris in his night.

CT 603

*dd mdw m-k inn-n(-i) n-k
sm3.w (i)t-k wsir
m rn.w-sn ipw nw sm3.w*¹²⁴

Words to say: behold, I bring you
those who slaughtered your father Osiris
in their names of those of the wild bull.

CT 837

*sh3 stš
di r ib-k
mdw pw dd-n gb r-k f3.w pw ir-n ntr.w
n-k m hw.t sr wr.t imi.t iwnw*

Remember Seth
and put it in your heart.
These are the words that Geb said against you;
it is the threat which the gods have made
against you in the palace of the Great Prince,
which is in On
when you felled Osiris on the earth in Nedit¹²⁶.

*m ndi-n-k wsir r t3 m ndi(.t)*¹²⁵

CT 887

*m3-i sh.t m3-i*¹²⁷ [n] *fd wsir*¹²⁸

I will see the fields; I will see him who tore
Osiris apart.

Similarly, also Osiris's murder is referred to, but this time employing the verb *sm3*, meaning indeed "to slay" but also "to kill". Instances mentioning the killing are not derived from those just writing about Seth striking Osiris, being their evolution. In fact, the two expressions coexist already in the *Pyramid Texts*.

PT 543

*dd mdw ism n wsir N pw
wsir N in n-k sm3 kw*¹²⁹ *m nn pr-f m- 'k*

Words to say: bring (him) to Osiris N.
Osiris N, him who killed¹³⁰ you is brought

¹²³ Transcription based on De Buck, 1938, p. 113 e.

¹²⁴ Transcription based on De Buck, 1956, p. 217 h-k.

¹²⁵ Transcription based on De Buck, 1961, p. 37 e-h.

¹²⁶ The name of the city has been corrupted in *ndi-n-k*.

¹²⁷ Suffix pronoun *-i* emended by Faulkner since *-f* is apparently inappropriate (Faulkner, 1978, p. 52).

¹²⁸ Transcription based on De Buck, 1961, p. 99 k-l.

wsir N *in n-k sm3 kw ir n nm-f*

wsir N *pn in n-k sm3 kw š ' m 3*¹³¹

to you; do not let him escape from you.

Osiris N, him who killed you is brought to you; perform his slaughtering.

Osiris N, him who killed you is brought to you cut in three.

PT 670

h ' m3-k irt-n n-k sz-k

irs [sdm-k irt-n n-k hr]

*hw-n-f n-k hw tw m ih*¹³²

sm3-n-f n-k sm3 tw m sm3

*k3s-n-f n-k k3s tw*¹³⁴

Stand up and see what your son has done for you

Awake [and hear what Horus has done for you].

He has struck him who has struck you like an ox.

He slaughtered for you him who has slaughtered you like a wild bull¹³³.

He has bound him who has bound you.

PT 580

dd mwd hw it(-i) sm3 wr ir-f

hw-n-k it(-i) sm3-n-k wr ir-k

it wsir ppi pn hw-n(-i) n-k hw tw m ih

sm3-n(-i) n-k sm3 tw m sm3

ng3-n(-i) n-k ng3 tw m ng3(.w)

wnw-k hr sz-f m hr sz

pd tw m pd.t šsr tw m šsr

*id tw m id*¹³⁵

Words to say: he who has struck (my) father, he who has slaughtered someone greater than he,

you have struck (my) father, you who has slaughtered someone greater than you.

Father Osiris Pepi, I have struck for you him who has struck you like an ox.

I slaughtered for you him who slaughtered you like a wild bull.

I have killed who has killed you like a long-horned cattle.

You are on his back like him who is on the back of the ox.

He who has stretched you out is like a slaughtered ox, he who has slayed you is like a sacrificial bull.

He who has deafened you is like a bull.

¹²⁹ This enclitic pronoun indicates the old nature of the text.

¹³⁰ However, the verb *sm3* might also be translated “to slay”; cf. Zandee, 1960, p. 152-153.

¹³¹ Transcription based on Sethe, 1910, p. 239, §§ 1337 a-d.

¹³² PT 670 and PT 580 are constructed on puns between verbs and objects, and on paronomasias.

¹³³ *sm3* (“wild bull”) is referred to Osiris.

¹³⁴ Transcription based on Sethe, 1910, p. 476-477, §§ 1976a – 1977c.

¹³⁵ Transcription based on Sethe, 1910, p. 329-330, §§ 1543a – 1545 b.

In the last two examples above, built on the comparison of the death of Seth and Osiris, the choice of terms gives a sacrificial character to the death of Osiris. Utterance PT 580 reports the dismemberment of Seth, who compared to a wild-bull, as a punishment for what he has done to Osiris, in his turn cut into pieces by his evil brother. As opposite to this, Osiris's death, by means of equating him to slaughtering animals and to the sacred ox (*iḥ*), takes a considerable and ritual significance, namely that of a sacrifice. Yet, of course, the murder committed by Seth was not absolutely intended to be a sacrifice. On the contrary, when Horus crushed Seth, revenging his father, the evil god was treated exactly like a victim and, as enemy of Osiris, the pieces of his body were offered to the great god¹³⁶.

According to Guilhou, the brutality of the description, as well as the equation of Osiris with slaughtering animals, indicates that the one referred to is the “second death” – chronologically speaking – of Osiris, i.e. the violent one taking place after Seth has found the hidden body of his brother¹³⁷. At this point, however, Seth tore his body into pieces. Indeed, the mutilation of Osiris's body is well-known in the early sources, actually figuring together with the other elements of the myth¹³⁸. An example, even though confused, is PT 482.

PT 482

sn.t-k wr.t s3k.t iwf-k kfn.t dr.wt

*shn.t tw gm.t tw hr gs-k hr wdb ndi.t*¹³⁹

It is your great sister who pulled together
your flesh, who put together your hands,
who sought you, who found you on your
side on the riverbank of Nedit.

Isis uniting (*s3k*) her brother's flesh (*iwf*) is a clear reference to the dismemberment of Osiris. The spell makes some confusion in the succession of the events, reversing it. Indeed, it reads firstly about the restoration of the body (§ 1008b) and only in a second time about the search and discovery of Osiris (§ 1008c). This shows that, by the time of Pepi I, the account of the myth of Osiris was already in disarray. Utterance PT 670, another version of PT 482 in Neith's pyramid, omits §§

¹³⁶ Cf. Zandee, 1960, p. 152-153.

¹³⁷ Guilhou, 1998a.

¹³⁸ Griffiths asserts that the episode of the dismemberment did not appear in the earliest tradition, as in Predynastic and early Dynastic Egypt (1980, p. 24-25).

¹³⁹ Transcription based on Sethe, 1910, p. 66, §§ 1008b-c.

1008b-c, recognising the difficulties connected with that version of the legend¹⁴⁰. Nevertheless, as the spell demonstrates, the dissection of Osiris's corpse was alluded to immediately, even though only indirectly by means of his restoration. On the contrary, the later tradition will be more explicit, actually mentioning his dissevered limbs.

An interesting example is CT 50, in which Seth personally explains his intention of killing his brother and of cutting him into pieces. All the accounts of the death of the god are actually referred to in the past, both by means of allusions – as for instance “the day of” – and more or less veiled narration. In this case, as demonstrated by Seth menaces, the murder has not ideally taken place yet.

CT 50

in iw wn ity n(-i) sn-f
m h.t mni ʿ3
m-k stš iw m hpr.w-f
dd-n-f ssnd h ʿw ntr
dy hm nkn n-f
*iry š ʿt-f*¹⁴²

Is there one who takes away his brother¹⁴¹
 after the great mooring (i.e. death)?
 Behold, Seth comes in all his manifestations.
 He said: “I will frighten the limbs of the god;
 I will indeed wound him;
 I will make his slaughtering”.

Whereas the *Pyramid Texts* and the *Coffin Texts* were quite at ease with references to Osiris's massacre, the *Book of the Dead* was not. The “direct” mention of his murder is much less frequent. In parallel, with the decrease of this kind of allusion, epithets denoting Osiris as a dead god augment almost exponentially. It seems a paradox, but earlier sources were actually more explicit. In this spell, the deceased takes the role of the embalmer of the god.

BD 80

n ts hr-t(w)-f
*hr(.w) nty hn ʿ-f m in.t 3bd.w*¹⁴³

The one who has been felled has not been raised up,
 he who was with him has fallen in the valley of
 Abydos.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Mercer, 1952b, p. 512.

¹⁴¹ Only in B10C^b. Other coffin read instead: *in iw r r wn di n(-i) sn-f*, “Is there someone who gives me his brother”. The meaning of this line is obscure, but it likely concerns Seth.

¹⁴² Transcription based on De Buck, 1935, p. 227 d-h.

¹⁴³ Transcription based on the version of the Papyrus of Any.

In this instance the text employs the verb *ḥr* (“to fall” or “to fell”) which by the time of the New Kingdom is the typical one to refer to Apophis repulsion, also in the causative form *shṛ*. The use of this term is clearly euphemistic, nonetheless it assumes a different shade of meaning whether referred to Osiris or Apophis, since, for the latter “second death” is meant.

3.3.2. *Osiris’s death referred to by means of the verb meaning “to kill”*

In parallel to periphrases and softened phrases to denote the god as someone who has perished and is now dead, texts wrote of it also in more direct ways. Similar instances are rare and are found in particular contexts only. The use of the verbs *smꜣ* and *ngꜣ*, both meaning indeed “to kill”, is attested already in spells from the *Pyramid Texts* (PT 543, PT 580, PT 670)¹⁴⁴ in which their action is reversed to Seth. However, in such instances the name of Osiris is silenced.

A line from the Middle Kingdom pRamesseum 9 (pBM EA 10762)¹⁴⁵, on the contrary, employs *smꜣ* in combination with the name of Osiris. The content of the papyrus consists in rituals aimed at protecting a house from magic, ghosts and serpents. The passage under analysis reads:

pRamesseum 9

*m-ḥt [2,7] smꜣ-k it(-i) wsir*¹⁴⁶

After you have killed (my) father Osiris¹⁴⁷.

Shifting to another literary genre, but always in a magic context, a spell from a medical papyrus is as explicit as ever. Not only does the text read that Osiris has been killed (*smꜣ*), but it also names all the characters of the myth, associating them unambiguously with that statement. The main characteristic of magical papyri is that myth was used as an example for practical purposes, namely that of healing. The magician hence evoked deities and mythical episodes of imaginary antecedents,

¹⁴⁴ See above p. 111-112.

¹⁴⁵ Gardiner, 1955, p. 12.13.

¹⁴⁶ Transcription after Gardiner, 1955, pl. XLIA.

¹⁴⁷ This sentence actually follows a speech by Horus.

deliberately invented for the purpose, to work as a model for the sufferer¹⁴⁸. As a matter of fact, since a similar remedy has healed deities, it would cure the patient likewise. In this case, the antecedent is actually based on the Osirian myth. The text concerned is recorded in hieratic script on papyrus Ebers and dates back to the reign of Amenhotep I. It is the second spell¹⁴⁹ of the medical papyrus and it consists of the lower half of the first column and the first half of the first line of the second one (1,12-2,1). The patient evokes Isis, asking her to release him from everything evil and from the influence of gods, goddesses, male dead, female dead, and whichever opponent would oppose him, in the same way in which she has been released by giving birth to Horus. The very beginning introduces the mythical antecedent. It is then followed by the invocation to the goddess, demanding the same treatment for the claimer or a third party (the patient) and explaining also the reason why the latter should be granted his wish. Finally, in the last line the effectiveness of the incantation is confirmed. The reason why the Osirian myth is quoted as the antecedent of the spell is yet unclear¹⁵⁰. However, it is cited to explain that the evil done to Horus consists in the murder of his father before the latter having conceived his heir. Nonetheless, by giving birth to Horus, as incarnation of his predecessor, and releasing him from the evil done to him by Seth, Isis guarantees both the cycle of death and resurrection and of kingship succession¹⁵¹. The first part of the spell reads:

pEbers

[1,12] *iry*¹⁵² *r3 n wh' wt nb*

[1,12] Another spell to loosen any bandage.

wh'w in s.t wh' hr in s.t hr m dw.t

Someone is loosened by Isis; Horus is loosened by Isis from the evil

[1,13] *iry t r-f in sn-f stš m sm3-f it-f wsir*¹⁵³

[1,13] done to him by his brother Seth¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁸ For example, magical spells write about divinities – comprising among others Ra, Isis and Horus – suffering of headache, stomachache, burn, poisoning and birthing pains. Exemplificative collections of this kind of texts are given in Borghouts, 1978, Bardin, 1995, and Leitz, 1999.

¹⁴⁹ According to Van Dijk (1979–1980) the spell would actually represent the rebirth of the sun god at dawn as well as the birth of Horus as son of Osiris.

¹⁵⁰ Van Dijk (1979-1980, p. 23-25) suggests that, since the untying of bandages represents the possibility of having recovered from illness, the patient is particularly anxious in this delicate moment in which he will find out if the medicament previously applied to him by means of bandages has worked. The recital mythological antecedent is consequently intended to reassure him from a psychological point of view, reminding the patient that the triumph of Horus has assured cosmic order, prevailing over chaos, which is embodied by Seth. Thus, the patient is assured his place both in cosmic and social order, just like Osiris's after Horus avenged him.

¹⁵¹ Van Dijk, 1979-1980, p. 22.

¹⁵² Read *ky*.

when he killed his father Osiris.

The unusual transparency of this text can only be explained in regard to the practical nature of magical and medical papyri. Funerary literature was conceived as a practical guide too, yet its purpose was completely different. The latter was aimed at assuring the deceased king at first and private people in a later time a renewed state of existence in the afterlife. Osiris was one of its symbols and placing too much emphasis on the violent nature of his death would have proven counterproductive. As a matter of fact, the deceased used to identify himself with the god and demanded thus a happy afterlife, being properly embalmed and restored, just like Osiris was. On the contrary, in the case of magical and medical papyri the concerned individual was in agony and expected that also deities suffered in the course of their lives, having experienced his same grief or maybe one even greater than his. Therefore, periphrases and euphemisms were of no help¹⁵⁵.

3.3.3. Osiris referred to as dead

Along with verbs explicitly referring to the act of killing, Osiris is designated as someone who has indeed died. A spell of the *Coffin Texts*, dealing with the deceased existence in the afterlife, addresses the god as “the dead Osiris” (*wsîr mwt*).

CT 1050

*r' n wnn m ntr sp 2 n wsîr
nn mn m33.t wsîr m(w)t(.w)
îrî- 'rr.wt msw m 'w3*¹⁵⁶

Spell to be a god, twice, for Osiris.
He who sees the dead Osiris shall not die.
The gate-keeper is he who gains through robbery.

The explanation for such straightforwardness is to be searched in the figure of Osiris himself and in the promise made to the deceased. The text states indeed that whoever will see Osiris as a dead god will not die, namely suffer “second death”. The

¹⁵³ Transcription based on Ebers, 1875, p. 21. A full translation is available in Eberst, 1875, p. 23 and Borghouts, 1978, p. 49, no. 81.

¹⁵⁴ In *The Contendings of Horus and Seth* (pChester Beatty I) Seth is presented also as the elder brother of Horus consequently to the combination of different myths.

¹⁵⁵ The best example is certainly the incantation dealing with Horus bitten by snakebite, which actually does not end with the god's death but only with his fainting. On this, see p. 258-261.

¹⁵⁶ Transcription based on De Buck, 1961, p. 302 d-f.

deceased has necessarily passed away in order to meet Osiris as god of the dead. As a matter of fact, according to the *Book of the Two Ways* which this spell is part of, in the middle region of the hereafter called Rosetau – the place where the graphical map accompanying the composition would have guided him – the deceased would have met the corpse of Osiris “locked in darkness and surrounded by fire”, as CT 1080 explains. Osiris’s identity as dweller of the Netherworld is made explicit by the term *mwt*. This of course does not mean that he has ceased to exist and suffered “second death”; in fact, he is actually living forever in the afterlife. Consequently, once he has traversed the Underworld, overcome the many obstacles on his way and reached him, the deceased would be granted his afterlife likewise.

However, the verb *mwt* it has an extremely negative connotation. In the funerary literature the deceased affirms indeed that he will not die but that, on the contrary, he will live eternally¹⁵⁷. Other verbs dealing with death also have the same meaning. In BD 152a Osiris is denoted as a dead, this time employing the verb *ski*, properly meaning “to go down”¹⁵⁸, but generally used in negative sentences. It also describes the setting of the stars and, above all, that of the imperishable ones, those who do not set. As a consequence, when referred to people, the verb means “to perish” and stands in clear opposition to life (‘*nh*’)¹⁵⁹. Also when attached to this connotation, *ski* normally appears in negative sentences with the meaning of “not to die”. In the case of BD 152a the verb has a negative connotation, but no allusion to the cause of Osiris’s death is mentioned. In this instance Osiris is designated as a death since, as ruler of the Netherworld, he announces the deceased’s arrival in the Duat.

BD 152a

*sr wī r ‘ n wsīr sk(.y)*¹⁶⁰

The mouth of Osiris, who has perished¹⁶¹,
announces me.

In BD 166 we find instead the verb *mwt*, but Osiris is not directly named. The composition is part of the so-called supplementary chapters of the *Book of the Dead*

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Zandee, 1960, p. 45-48.

¹⁵⁸ Wb 4, 311.9-312.17.

¹⁵⁹ On *ski* with the meaning of “to perish” see Zandee, 1960, p. 50-51.

¹⁶⁰ Transcription based on the papyrus of Nu; Budge, 1899, pl. 26.

¹⁶¹ Quirke translates the line differently: “The mouth of Osiris, over time, announces me” (2013, p. 376).

(spells 162-174), as edited by Pleyte¹⁶². The earliest attestations date back to the second half of the XXI Dynasty, but its origin may have occurred either in the late XVIII-XIX Dynasties or slightly later¹⁶³.

BD 166

<i>i w-r-b-g i km-m-r i 'mg i k-r- h 'm i k-m-ry</i>	O, <i>w-r-b-g</i> ! O, <i>km-m-r</i> ! O, 'mg! O, <i>k-r-h 'm</i> ! O, <i>k-m-ry</i> ! ¹⁶⁴
<i>nzy wnrm t n3 wdḥ.w</i>	Those of <i>w-n-r-mt</i> , those of the offering jug
<i>hr-tw n r 'itn</i>	It is said of Ra, the sun disk,
<i>r hrp n.w nty im</i>	to govern themselves whatever exists.
<i>imi hr-tn n i(3)kb.y w dr.wt</i>	Turn your faces to the mourned one ¹⁶⁵ ,
<i>sw mwt(.w) m g3 sm3 sn¹⁶⁶-f</i>	he is dead in want, killed by his brother ¹⁶⁷ .
<i>ir s(w) gb n kt¹⁶⁸</i>	The son ¹⁶⁹ did it (i.e. the murder) as the <i>kt</i> -crocodile
<i>nn 'w r nhp-f¹⁷⁰</i>	there is no one to protect him.
<i>hr iw.w r in b3-f</i>	So they will carry his ba
<i>r t3 wsh.t m3 'ty</i>	to the hall of the two Maat

¹⁶² Pleyte's edition (1881) stands in contrast to Naville's (1886), who in his turn assigned numbers 166-174 to different additional compositions which were not included in the edition of the *Book of the Dead* by Lepsius (1842). As the other spells of the group, BD 166 is written in Late Egyptian and deals with religious concepts which differ from the traditional ones that we normally find in the *Book of the Dead*. This suggests a possible origin in the context of the Theban temple theology (Cf. Willems, 2014, p. 396).

¹⁶³ The first possibility is that proposed by Quack, 2011, p. 255-256. Wüthrich, on the contrary, suggests a time range not earlier than the Ramesside Period (2010, p. 10-15).

¹⁶⁴ One of peculiarities of BD 166 is the use of "secret names" referred to gods, a characteristic also shared with other supplementary chapters, even though the ones found in BD actually occur in this chapter only. Such names are written by means of syllabic writing. Scholars have translated them in various ways, starting from Pleyte (1881, p. 61-62) to Allen (1974, p. 215, note 337) and, in recent times, Wüthrich, who associates them to Osiris (2010, p. 105-106).

¹⁶⁵ *izkby* has alternatively been intended as an active voice referred to Osiris (Wüthrich, 2010, p. 98; Cerny, 1942, p. 119; Barguet, 1967, p. 239, note 239). Yet, as Willems notes, sources never depict Osiris lamenting himself and it is more logical to regard him as someone mourned, according also to the ending -y (2014, p. 396). Allen indeed translates "the Mourned one" (1974, p. 215). Completely different is the translation by Quirke (2013, p. 518): "pay attention to the mourners, the kites" (*imi hr-tn n ikb.yw dr.wt*).

¹⁶⁶ pBerlin 3031 actually reads *sm3 hm-f*, probably a misunderstanding for *sn* since in hieratic the two signs look alike.

¹⁶⁷ Different translations are possible. For instance, Cerny translates it with an active sentence (1941, p. 119) as well as Allen (1974, p. 215), Willems with a relative form (2014, p. 409), and Quirke with a passive form (2013, p. 518).

¹⁶⁸ Some spells have the name of the god Maga.

¹⁶⁹ The papyrus reads *gb*, but as Willems suggests, it is possibly a miswriting of the sign of *s3* ("son") it too written by means of the sign of a goose (2014, p. 409). Otherwise the text would actually read that Geb has turned him (*s(w)*, i.e. Seth) into a crocodile. The name *mg3* is used both to designate Seth (Wb 2, 164.9) and a crocodile as his son (Wb 2, 164.8). The Harris Magical Papyrus terms indeed Maga as "son of Seth" (2,2; 6,5; 6,8). Te Velde rejects the idea of the crocodile being the son of Seth as Horus is the son of Osiris. He explains that "the intention is merely to express that a dangerous crocodile is a Sethian product" (1967, p. 150).

¹⁷⁰ The version proposed is from pBerlin 3031 (XXI Dynasty); Transcription after Quirke, 2013, p. 518. The translation of the names follows instead the syllabic one given by Willems, 2014.

The statements that Osiris is dead occur more than once throughout the passage quoted. His appellation as *izkb.y*, “the mourned one”, more logical a translation than “the Mourner”, suggest that the god has passed away. In the line immediately following, this fact is expressed more forcefully. Osiris is indeed said to be dead in want and that there is no one who can take care of his body. This most likely refers to the moment before his resurrection, as implied by what follows¹⁷¹. The text explains that he has been killed (*sm3*) by Seth. If the reading of *s3* (“son”) is correct¹⁷², it means that, according to this spell, the murder of Osiris was not committed by the hand of his evil brother but that Seth was actually helped by his son to commit the crime. In the following line the action is set in the hall of the two Maat, in which the *ba* of the deceased is conducted in front *m-m-r-m-k-h-b*, a deity playing the role of the judge. As Willems underlines, it is imperative to note that the *ba* concerned is followed by a possessive pronoun, the suffix pronoun *-f*. The subject to which it refers must necessarily be *izkb.y*, namely Osiris. The composition hence deals with two different aspects of Osiris, namely that of death and the vital one, represented by Osiris as a judge. It means that Osiris’s *ba* goes back to his corpse to reunite with it in order to resurrect both of them¹⁷³. Their union is made clear further on, when the text reads that the *ba*’s name is *m-m-r-m-k-h-b*. So, next to the image of Osiris lying in want (i.e. dead) is contraposed to that of his resurrection, achieved by means of the union of his *ba*.

Completely different in its meaning is the statement that we find in *the Contendings of Horus and Seth*, a tale made up by minor episodes and intended to amuse the public. The behavior of some of the gods is indeed almost outrageous in some of the key passages¹⁷⁴. In one of the minor episodes, Isis takes the appearance of a young beautiful woman in order to force Seth to admit that Osiris’s legacy is owed to Horus. She achieves her aim by means of a trick: Isis tells him a metaphorical story, which is actually based on the real events that led to the struggle between Horus and Seth, and asks deceptively to her brother for his opinion about a matter of family inheritance. In the fictional story that she narrates him, she pretends to be the wife of a herdsman who actually died and whose flock has been inherited by his son until a

¹⁷¹ Cf. Willems, 2014, p. 413.

¹⁷² The variants show numerous misunderstandings.

¹⁷³ Cf. Willems, 2014, p. 413-415.

¹⁷⁴ Bresciani, 1969, p. 341; Wente, 2003b, p. 91.

stranger has taken it over, having no right to do so. When Isis says that her husband, namely the herdsman, has died, she is actually alluding to Osiris. This is indeed an indirect reference but is definitely explicit, using neither periphrases nor euphemisms.

The Contendings of Horus and Seth

<i>ir ink wn-i m hm.t m-dzy.t w' mni.w-ih.w</i>	As for me, I lived as the wife of a herdsman
<i>iw-i [6,9] (hr) ms n-f w' sz-tz.y</i>	I bore him a male son.
<i>iw pzy-i h3 (hr) mt</i>	But my husband died.
<i>iw p3 'dz hpr m-s3 n3 izw.t¹⁷⁵ n pzy-f it</i>	And the child began (to guard) the herds of his father.
<i>[6,10] hr-ir w' r(m)t dridr (hr) izy</i>	And then a foreigner arrived
<i>iw-f (hr) hms m pzy-i ihzy.</i>	and occupied my shed.

The explanation for this is that the veiled account of the death of Osiris, a tale within the tale, is the result of a fictitious narrative which in its turn is part of a composition certainly aimed at amusing the public. However, while laughing at the events surrounding Osiris's death did not seem very convenient for the ancient Egyptians, the context of the story may somehow have allowed it.

3.4. Metaphorical descriptions of Osiris's death

The burial of Osiris is a central element of the Osirian myth and is referred to in many instances. An unusual reference to it is found in the London Medical Papyrus (British Museum EA 10059), dating back to the New Kingdom. It comprises a spell against two unknown kinds of disease and describes Osiris in the embalming hall (*w'b.t*), opening his mouth to announce the revenge of his son¹⁷⁶. His presence in the embalming hall is a clear reference of the fact that he is deceased, yet Osiris acts as if he were still alive, and the spell never mentions the fact that he is lifeless.

The Late Period development of the ideas dealing with divine death offers us an interesting metaphorical image. One concerning Osiris is found in the sixth of the seventh stanza addressed to the god in the *Rite of Introducing the Multitude on the Last*

¹⁷⁵ The pun on *izw.t* "cattle" and "office" has firstly been noted by Gardiner. When Isis is speaking of cattle, she is actually meaning the royal office of her husband. Cf. Gardiner, 1932, p. 43a, 45a.

¹⁷⁶ A full translation is available in Borghouts, 1978, p. 35-36, no. 53.

*Day of Tekh*¹⁷⁷, a text recorded in columns 46-56 of the Ptolemaic papyrus of Imuthes (pMMA 35.9.21). All the stanzas are uttered by Isis with the only exception of the second one, which is also shorter, declaimed by Nut as Osiris's mother. From the point of view of its content, the composition resembles other Osirian texts in which the deceased god is restored to life and lamented on. Indeed, Isis cries for her husband with all the sorrow she is experiencing as a consequence of his departure, but also tells him that he is vindicated, having Seth being punished and having Horus ascended on the throne as legitimate successor. Nevertheless, Osiris is constantly asked to come back¹⁷⁸. In a passage of the sixth stanza (51,13-52,6) the dead god is compared to a downed tree and the description of his corpse insists on his incapacity to move, denoting him as lifeless. Such poetic description of Osiris's dead corpse is found nowhere else.

Papyrus of Imuthes (pMMA 35.9.21)

[51,13] <i>hn.ty-k wš-k tkn r hr.t</i>	The limits of your absence approach the sky.
[51,14] <i>kšn.wy wdy.t r-k r-i</i>	How painful is your departure from me.
[51,15] <i>zb-i n m33-k sp 2 htp-ir.w-f</i>	I wish to see you (twice), you whose figure is at rest
<i>zb-i n m33-k</i> [51,16] <i>sdr hr psd-f mi ht š 'd</i>	I wish to see you (twice), he who lies on his back like a felled tree ¹⁷⁹ ,
[52,1] <i>hw k'y m hnw-f</i>	which the <i>k3y</i> -animal ¹⁸⁰ has attacked in its interior.
[52,2] <i>'wy-f sh3 m drw.w-f</i>	His arms are hanging at his sides,
[52,3] <i>rd.wy-f dwn nn qr(f)-f s(t)</i>	his legs are stretched without him contracting them.
[52,4] <i>im hr hw ks.w-f</i>	(Only) the skin is protecting his bones.
[52,5] <i>nhl.w pw nn iw-f r-nhh</i>	To be lamented is he who will never return.
[52,6] <i>mn.t im-f sniw ir.w-f</i> ¹⁸¹	The suffering in him alters his form.

¹⁷⁷ Tekh ("the time of drunkenness") is the alternative name of the month of Thoth, the first one of the inundation season, during which the festival of drunkenness used to take place (on 20 Thoth), offering wine and other alcoholic beverages to Hathor. Nevertheless, in the course of this month Osirian feats were also celebrated and, as the title suggests, this text was meant to be recited on the thirtieth and final day of Thoth.

¹⁷⁸ An introduction to the text is found in Smith, 2009, p. 152-155.

¹⁷⁹ This is the sole attestation of such designation of Osiris; cf. LGG VI, 743.

¹⁸⁰ The parallels of this text have a plural form. This animal is unknown: Goyon (1999) interprets it as some kind of necrophilous insects devouring the corpse of the god. Along the same lines are also Smith who translates "The *k3i*-animal has struck with him" (2009, p. 169) and LGG V, 64. On the contrary, Kucharek understands the clause as referred to the fallen tree and not to Osiris, suggesting the *k3i*-animal being consequently a termite and thus translates "den das *k3i*-Tier in seinem Inneren (nieder)warf" (Smith, 2009, p. 163, note 73 quoting Kucharek).

¹⁸¹ Transcription after Feder in TLA (accessed 10/2016).

3.5. Summary and cross references

Despite that the most complete ancient Egyptian account of the death of Osiris dates back to the XVIII Dynasty, literature has conspicuous scattered evidence of the Osirian myth which appear as soon as funerary literature itself. Evidence consists of anecdotes, which do not compose a unified account, since the primary purpose of ancient Egyptian literature was not that of editing the various episodes of the Osirian myth. This resulted in contrasting versions of the account. Moreover, details were omitted because of the magical power of the spoken word, since the practice of writing them down would have resulted in eternizing them. Even in the context of the festival of Abydos the god's death remains unmentioned. In addition to this, the events resulting in Osiris's death must have been well known among people, and there was consequently no need for them to be recorded. Two possible traditions coexist, one in regard to a violent death, the other concerning the possibility for Osiris to have died by drowning – an event either caused by Seth or accidental – which lately scholars tend to reject. References to episodes of the Osirian myth are found already in the *Pyramid Texts*. Spells deal with the murder both genteelly by means of periphrases and euphemistic terms, and also more explicitly, using verbs denoting violence. In this regard, even the term “to kill” (*sm3*) is employed. These two aspects are complementary and coexist necessarily as two sides of the same coin. Yet, the violent aspect is much more present in the earlier literature than in the later one. By the time of the composition of the *Book of the Dead*, utterances reading the fact that Seth has bitten, slaughtered and killed Osiris, insisting on the violent aspect of the murder, practically disappeared. Analogously, Ptolemaic Period liturgies and lamentations, dealing primarily with the god's rebirth, were more allusive and set apart the violent aspect of the murder, according to their nature. Hymns did the same, insisting on the might of the god rather than on his defeat. In response to this, we can note the frequency of epithets increasing exponentially by the time of *Book of the Dead*.

The most recurrent epithet is *wrd-ib*, appeared for the first time in the *Coffin Texts* and lasting up to the Ptolemaic Period. Similarly, also the periphrasis of the god lying on his side, departing for a journey, or depicted as asleep, vanish from the literary record of the New Kingdom. The idea of sleep possibly evolved in that of weariness, which started to emerge in the *Coffin Texts* and which might even have had a mightier connotation. Yet, Middle and New Kingdoms texts also designated Osiris as a dead

(*mwt.w*). This would occur in particular contexts: funerary (CT 1050, BD 166), medical-magical (pEbers), and narrative (*the Contendings of Horus and Seth*).

However, both in the case of periphrases, euphemistic terms and violent depiction of the murder, the identity of Osiris can be either implicit or made explicit by occasionally mentioning his name. In the *Pyramid Texts*, the god's name is only mentioned in contexts euphemistically describing his assassination (PT 478, PT 532, PT 576, PT 649), whereas in Middle Kingdom texts it appears next to terms dealing with slaughtering and killing (CT 105, CT 887, pRamesseum 9). When epithets prevail, the god's name does not need to be mentioned at all, being his identity easily detectable in the epithet itself. The connection between Seth and the murder is established as early as in the *Pyramid Texts* (PT 532, PT 576).

From a grammatical the point of view, in the beginning texts underline the condition of being of Osiris when euphemistically referred to. In this instance the emphasis is on the result of the crime committed by Seth rather than on the action of murdering the god itself. The use of statives, along with that of *sdm-n-f* forms, both denoting concluded actions, even though not describing a tense, demonstrate that the ancient Egyptians acknowledged the death of Osiris from the very beginning. The stative is also used in regard to the temporary murder of Apophis and Seth as god's enemies. In this instance, the standard verb from the New Kingdom on is *hr*, which also occurs in association with Osiris (PT 442, *Dramatic Ramesseum Papyrus*).

However, the death of Osiris is most likely not the first divine death ever conceived by the ancient Egyptian literature. Such theme indeed seems to appear in an earlier time, as utterance PT 273-274 demonstrates.

No figurative depiction of the death of Osiris exists, contrarily to vignettes and reliefs portraying the slaughtering of Apophis and of Seth in form of hippopotamus, respectively.

As for the symbolical meaning of the god's death, it is fundamental to underline that Osiris never came back to life – or better – that he did not stay dead, nor did he return among the living. He reached a new form of existence living eternally in the afterlife, a place that he has only reached by firstly passing away. Contrarily to Ra, who descends daily in the Duat, Osiris cannot leave the realm of the dead even though, by uniting with this ba (i.e. Ra), he is constantly restored. However, as ruler of the dead's reign, he had his social role re-established thanks to his vindication by Horus as well as

the physical integrity of his body granted by means of the embalming process. These two aspects allowed him the eternal (*d.t*) afterlife in the Netherworld.

CHAPTER 4

THE SUN GOD¹

The sun god was one of the most important deities of the ancient Egyptian pantheon and, like Osiris, also an important symbol of rebirth. He set every night just to be born again every morning in an eternal cycle. In the same way in which he crossed the sky in the day bark, Ra also traversed the Netherworld in the night bark (*msk.tit*).

During the long life of the ancient Egyptian religious conceptions, Ra's figure merged with those of other divine beings, thus assimilating with Amun, Horus (Ra-Harakhty, "Horus of the horizon"), and Atum. The last one is represented as an aged and tired ram-headed god who is leaning heavily on his stick, perfectly exemplifying the form of the setting sun. Opposed to Atum, is Khepri, the scarab beetle and self-generating sun in the morning.

Texts and images of all periods describe the voyage of the sun bark from the East to the West and such aspect it is enthusiastically illustrated and exalted in solar hymns, which were extremely popular in the New Kingdom. To them we must add the funerary texts of the New Kingdom, the so-called Netherworld Guides. They narrate the nocturnal part of the sun's journey through the Netherworld, the overcoming of obstacle – among which the overthrown of Apophis – and the temporarily union of Ra and Osiris. They unite just as ba and corpse do, consequently being both regenerated by this union. The identification of the two of them is exalted in particular in the *Litany of Ra*, a praise addressed to the sun god who is descending into the Netherworld and reviving the dead dwelling in there. Hence, Ra's death (i.e. his setting) is the demonstration of the promise of the renewed life which follows physical death. It consisted in the sun god's coming back rejuvenated every morning after the nocturnal journey through the Netherworld's regions, as shown by the time of the appearance of the *Amduat*, the first fragments of which are from the tomb of Tuthmosis I. Further compositions dealing

¹ The bibliography on the sun god is extremely extensive and it is impossible to quote it entirely. Recent studies on the figure of the sun god are, for instance, Quirke's (1992, p. 21-51 and 2001). As for publications on more specific aspects of solar religion, an investigation on the worship of Ra in the early Dynastic Period is given in Kahl (2007), whereas the development of the solar theology in the New Kingdom is the central issue of one of the works by Assmann (1995), which also discusses the concept of Ra as unique god. As for solar hymns, some bibliography will be quoted throughout the chapter, whereas an early study on the issue is Scharff (1922). In regard to the form of the sun god at sunset, namely Atum, an analysis on the various writings of the god's name, epithets and iconography has been carried out by Mysliwiec (1978-1979).

with the subterranean journey of the sun god are the *Book of Gates*, the *Book of Caverns*, and the *Book of the Earth*².

Next to this tradition which had the sun god travelling through the Duat during his absence from the sky, a second and discrepant myth coexisted. As a matter of fact, with the purpose of explaining the daily rejuvenation of Ra as a young child, theologians appealed to the figure of Nut, the ancient Egyptiansky goddess *par excellence*. She, arched over the earth, was believed to swallow the sun god every night. Ra, after disappearing from the day sky, travelled through her body and womb in order to be delivered every morning from her vulva in the eastern part of the sky. In such myth the sun god's night journey is actually located in a celestial hereafter rather than in the Netherworld. The myth is narrated in the so called *Books of the Sky*, which were composed after the Amarna Period. It comprises various works, namely the *Book of Nut*, the *Book of the Night* and the *Book of the Day*³, and was inscribed in particular on the sarcophagus chambers' ceilings of royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings.

The daily course of the sun was the symbol of cyclical renewal and eternal regeneration in which all that had been created took part, human beings comprised. But, to come to life renewed the sun god has firstly to die.

4.1. The sun god setting

The idea of the daily death of Ra is as old as ancient Egyptian literature. Nevertheless, in what is likely the oldest solar hymn ever, the setting of the sun is actually not mentioned. The concerned text is an utterance from the *Pyramid Texts*, namely PT 587, one of the finest and oldest compositions of the entire collection. It consists in a hymn dedicated to Atum and is made up of two similar parts, the first focused on the sun god, the second on the king, who, in his turn, is identified with the sun god. The land of Egypt, addressed as the Eye of Horus, is told of the things that the sun god and the deceased king have done for it, respectively. Secondly, the spell lists the benefits that Egypt has given them in return for their actions. Despite this, later solar

² This last composition presents many affinities with the *Book of Caverns*, but a peculiar feature of the *Book of Earth* is the journey of the sun god through the earth god Aker, a theme which is actually an extended version of the eleventh scene of the *Book of Gates*.

³ Unlike the other compositions, this one narrates, as suggested by the title given to it by scholars, the diurnal journey of the sun god during the twelve hours of the day. As a matter of fact, Ra travels from Nut's vulva, from which he has been reborn at dawn, to her mouth which he will enter again at sunset.

hymns always deal with the sun god's death. In this regard, it is remarkable that the two earliest Middle Kingdom solar hymns attested on stelae from such period actually include praises to the setting sun⁴. As typical, the ancient Egyptians dealt with this concept in very euphemistic ways, always describing the sun god's descent in the west with the term *hṭp*, "to set" or "to rest". Nonetheless, some particular and interesting exceptions do exist, both in regard to terminology and meaning.

4.1.1. *The use of the verb hṭp*

The ancient Egyptians used to see the sun setting every evening in the Western mountain, descending in the realm of the dead. This moment was celebrated in hymns specifically dedicated to the setting sun but also in additional sources. Nevertheless, something that all of them have in common is the way in which the sun god's "passing away" is described. As a matter of fact, the verb employed is always the same, namely "to set" (*hṭp*). Never is the sun's going down explicitly referred to as a death in this kind of compositions.

In this regard, texts read different options and combinations of them. A basic and concise formula *hṭp-f* / *hṭp-k* exists but articulated ones occur more often, adding some further detail as for Ra's descent from the sky. A different formula describes Ra's decline as a set in life. In regard to the expression *m 'nh*, different translation and interpretation are possible. However, this expression is standard for solar hymns, also being their title in New Kingdom versions, among which is chapter BD 15⁵. Firstly, such expression can simply be translated "setting in life". Alternatively, we can intend it as "setting in the land of life"⁶. This can be an interpretation suggested by the spelling of the word *'nh* as inscribed in pBerlin 3049 in which it has indeed the desert determinative (N25 of Gardiner's sign list) and in the litany of the twelve names of Ra-Harakhty as inscribed in the Ptolemaic temple of Edfu⁷. In this case, the setting of Ra on

⁴ The concerned hymns are the one from the XI Dynasty stela of king Wahankh Antef II (stela MMA 13.182.3) and that from the Middle Kingdom stela from Abydos Cairo CG 20277; See Franke, 2010, p. 289-291.

⁵ A list of occurrences – comprising *Book of the Dead* papyri, tombs inscription, stelae, stelophors, and statues – is given in Assmann, 1969, p. 263-266.

⁶ Cf. for instance the translations of the different hymns composing BD 15 given in Quirke, 2013, p. 46-50.

⁷ Nevertheless, the sign representing the desert in the Ptolemaic Period has the phonetic value *nh* (cf. Daumas, 1988, p. 456), as attested in the mammisi of Edfu. In the concerned passage from the litany, the sun god is actually said to be accompanied by his retinue as he descends in the necropolis (cf. Gasse, 1984, p. 200, line 3).

the horizon is clearly depicted as a descent in the necropolis, which is indeed referred to by the determinative. Secondly, we can give the verb *hṭp* a different shade of meaning, translating it “to go to rest”. In his instance, the image of death as sleep, imagined as a transitory state, is followed by the god’s awakening the next morning, symbolized by dawn. Such image of Ra’s nocturnal journey in the underworld as a sleep is actually suggested by some hymns addressed to Ra-Harakhty in the morning. There we read indeed that the god wakes up (*rs*) beautifully⁸.

Instead of the canonical *sdm-f* form, a stative form for the verb *hṭp* is also attested in the second person singular (*hṭp.ti*), while addressing the sun god⁹.

Further information might be added to this basic formula, namely that Ra sets in the western mountain (*hṭp m m3nw*¹⁰), in the western horizon¹¹ of the sky (*hṭp m 3ḥ.t imn.tt nt p.t*), in the western horizon of the western mountain (*hṭp m 3ḥ.t m3nw*) or, more explicitly, in the Netherworld (*hṭp m dw3.t*¹²). When mentioning the Western Mountain, the necropolis is actually intended.

However, the formula *hṭp m ‘nh* is the most diffused one. It is almost omnipresent in New Kingdom solar hymns as well as in spells from the *Book of the Dead*¹³. Yet, it appears in the written record probably as soon as the time of the *Pyramid Texts*. As a matter of fact, we can find such expression in PT 603 (§ 1679b), a resurrection utterance, and more specifically in an incomplete passage from the pyramid of Merenra. Nonetheless, the concerned line is extremely ambiguous, since two opposite translations are possible. The expression *hṭp m ‘nh m imn.t* is actually referred to the king and not to the sun god himself, thus we can translate “he sets in life in the

⁸ Further occurrences are listed in Assmann, 1969, p. 168-169. The concerned passage from the hymn from the temple of Hibis in el-Khargeh oasis reads (Davies, 1953, pl. 30):

dw3 imn-r ‘hr.w-3ḥ.ty
ḏd mdw
rs-k nfr imn-r ‘hr.w-3ḥ.ty-itm

Praising Amun-Ra-Harakhty.
Words to say:
You wake up beautifully, Amun-Ra-Harakhty-Atum.

⁹ For example, stelophor Brooklin 3748 E. Remarkably, in the hymn the sun god is said to be the son of Isis.

¹⁰ The term, attested by the time of the *Book of the Dead*, is also used specifically to refer to the place in which the sun and the moon set, as well as to designate the realm of the dead (Wb 2, 29.11-13).

¹¹ The translation “horizon” is reductive. The *3ḥ.t* was actually the boundary zone between the Duat and the visible horizon. It was the means by which the ancient Egyptians explained the fact that some light is still visible after the sun has properly set as well as it is visible even before the sun has properly risen at dawn. Cf. Allen, 2003, p. 27.

¹² For instance, the hymns from the temple of Hibis in el-Khargeh oasis (Davies, 1953, pl. 33) and from pBerlin 3055.

¹³ In addition to the below quoted ones others have to be added: BD 6c, BD 15B2, BD 15B3c.

West”, “he is satisfied in living in the West”, or “he rests alive in the West”¹⁴. This last instance would actually be an allusion to the celestial hereafter awaiting the king.

PT 603

[... *h̥tp-f*] *m* ‘*n̥h m imn.t*
mm š(m)s.w r ‘*si* ‘*r h̥r.t n* ‘*nd.w*¹⁵

He sets in life in the West
among the following of Ra, who makes ascend
the way for the dawn.

As explained, in PT 603, however, the term *h̥tp* is not referred to the sun god but to the deceased who is actually compared to Ra. In other words, the setting is attributed to the deceased king in the first place, but, by means or the comparison with the sun god, it is also ascribed to Ra. Nevertheless, the sun god is not directly said to die. The same occurs in PT 650:

PT 650

ms sw mw.t-f p.t ‘*n̥h hrw nb imr*¹⁶ *r* ‘

His mother, the sky, will bear him, alive, every
day, like Ra.

h̥ ‘*f hn* ‘*-f m iʒb.t h̥tp-f hn* ‘*-f m imn.t*

He will rise with him in the East, set with him
in the West.

*nn iw mw.t-f nw.t im-f hrw nb*¹⁷

His mother Nut is not free from him every day.

The verb *h̥tp* is certainly referred to the deceased king, invited to join the retinue of the sun god and consequently to set with him in the Western desert.

Ending this brief digression and going back to the occurrences of the expression *h̥tp m* ‘*n̥h*, we find that it is well attested in Middle Kingdom evidence. An example is the stela of Sobekhotep (CG 20277) from Abydos dating back to the XIII Dynasty¹⁸:

¹⁴ Mercer, 1952a, p. 275: “[...] he rests alive in the West (or, he is satisfied in living in the West)”; Faulkner, 1969, p. 249: “[...] he rests] in life in the West”. Allen, 2005, p. 121: “[set from life with him in the West]”.

¹⁵ Transcription based on Sethe, 1910, p. 387, §§ 1679 b-c.

¹⁶ A spelling attested in the *Pyramid Texts* for *mi* (Cf. Wb 2, 36.9-38.5).

¹⁷ Transcription based on Sethe, 1910, p. 449, §§ 1835 a-c.

¹⁸ Mariette, 1880, p. 259, no. 810; Franke, 2003, p. 111-112.

Stela of Sobekhotep

<i>rdi.t <y> i3.w n r' hft htp-f</i> <i>m 'nh hrw nb in wr-md.w-šm'.w sbk-htp</i>	Giving praises to Ra when he sets in life every day by greatest of the tens of Upper Egypt Sobekhotep ¹⁹ .
--	---

The same expression is extremely recurrent in solar hymns of the New Kingdom, when this category of texts certainly reaches a peak. Some examples are quoted below:

BD 15d

<i>m mšr.w nmī-n-k n mw.t-k nw.t</i>	In the evening you have travelled to your mother Nut.
<i>dī-k hr-k r imn.tt</i>	You turn your face to the West.
<i>'wy-i m i3w m htp-k m 'nk</i>	My arms are (raised) in worship at your setting in life.
<i>ntk is ir nhh</i>	You are the maker of eternity.
<i>dw3-tw m htp-k m nw.w</i>	You are worshipped in your setting in the Nun.
<i>dī(-i) tw m ib-i iwtv bg3</i>	I place you in my heart, which is not getting tired.
<i>ntr-k r ntr.w nb.w</i>	You are more divine than all the gods.

Hymn to the setting sun (BD 15)

<i>dw3 r' m wbn-f m 3h.t</i>	Praising Ra at his rising on the horizon
<i>r hpr htp-f m 'nh²⁰</i>	until his setting in life.
<i>dd mdw in wsir N²¹</i>	Words said by the Osiris N.

Book of the Night, 1st hour

<i>htp m 'nh in hm n ntr pn</i>	Setting in life by the majesty of this god,
<i>irt šsp hḏw.t m kk.w</i>	throwing light and luminescence in the darkness,
<i>wb3 sb3 n p.t m imn.tt²²</i>	opening the door of the sky in the West.

¹⁹ Transcription based on Lange; Schäfer, 1902a, p. 292-293, 1902b, pl. XX.

²⁰ These two lines are actually the title of the hymn. The same applies to 15g, 15h, and 15i.

²¹ From the papyrus of Ani (pBM 10470); Budge, 1913, pl. 18-19. The occurrences of this hymn are not limited to *Book of the Dead* papyri.

²² Hieroglyphic edition of the text by Piankoff, 1942, p. 35.

Stele Berlin 7306

psd-k m hr-i [hr] dw3.yt
*r hpr htp-k m 'nh*²³

May you shine on my face from the morning
up to your setting in life.

Other hymns are more accurate and specify that the sun god is setting in his form of Atum²⁴, the one depicted as an old man. In a hymn from TT 157 we read indeed that the sun god sets “in life as Atum” (*htp-k m 'nh m tm*)²⁵. In further instances Atum is actually mentioned in connection with old age and Ra growing old. Examples of this are, among others:

pBerlin 3049

[IV,7] *imn-r*²⁶ *n 'y m m 'sr.w hft nhh*
*tm pw htp-f m 'nh*²⁷

Amun-Ra, who travels in the evening when he
has become old.
Atum is he, when he sets in life²⁸.

Hymn to Sobek-Ra

hr hnw[-f?] m r ' hrw nb
snhh-f m itm htp-f m 'nh

Horus who rejuvenates as Ra every day,
who grows old as Atum, when he sets in
life²⁹.

²³ Hieroglyphic transcription in Roeder, 1924, p. 132. The stela dates back to the New Kingdom.

²⁴ Exceptionally, the name of Atum can be replaced by that of Thoth, thus associating the setting sun with the moon, represented by Thoth in his nature of lunar deity. So far, two occurrences are known and they are a hymn to the rising sun from TT2 (Assmann, 1983, p. 7), and the stela of the scribe Sobekhotep (British Museum 280[1163]; edited by British Museum, 1913, pl. 21).

TT2:

ind hr-k r ' m wn(n)-f
dhw.ti m htp-f
m rn-f pw n nb ntr.w
imn nswt psd.t

Hail to you, Ra at your rising,
Thoth at your setting,
in your name of Lord of the gods,
Amun, king of the Ennead.

Stela of the scribe Sobekhotep:

sh 'ti m r ' hrw nb nb 3h.t
m dhw.ti nb hmn.w

You appeared daily as Ra, lord of the horizon,
(and) as Thoth, lord of Hermopolis.

²⁵ Assmann, 1983, p. 194-195; Assmann, 1975, p. 233-235, no. 100.

²⁶ The divine determinative is written twice.

²⁷ Gülden, 2001, p. 22. The papyrus has been written during the reign of Thutmose III.

²⁸ The term 'nh has the desert determinative (N25 of Gardiner's sign list).

²⁹ The hymn is recorded on the hieratic pStrasbourg 2 and 7, dated on paleographical basis to the last century BC and likely coming from Gebelein. The concerned passage of the hieroglyphic transcription can be found in Bucher, 1928, p. 158.

In a hymn inscribed on a stela from the tomb of Roy (TT 255), dated to the reign of Horemheb, the ba of Ra is said to set in his shrine³⁰. This text dates back to the early time after the Amarna Period and is centered on the equation between Ra and Osiris, the latter regarded as a manifestation of the night sun. As a matter of fact, every night, when he descends in the Underworld, the sun god unites with the body of Osiris, who is dwelling in the Duat. This myth makes its appearance in hymns only from the second half of the XVIII Dynasty as the result of a reaction against the religious beliefs imposed by Akhenaten³¹. During the Amarna Period, the theme of the underworld journey of the sun has been completely rejected and replaced by a simple description of the state of the world during the absence of the sun disk. As for the sunset, the terminology used to describe it remained untouched. Hence even the great hymn to the Aten from the tomb of Aye, the finest of all the texts of this kind, reads that the sun sets (*hṭp*) in the Western Horizon, leaving the earth into darkness. Besides, such obscurity is compared to death. As a matter of fact, when the sun goes to rest, so do people likewise. On the contrary, lions and snakes start their night activity in antithesis to mankind. Such absence of life is regarded as cosmic “death” which indeed consists in the reversion to the world preceding creation. Consequently, according to this view, the new act of creation corresponds to a new sunrise.

Great Hymn to the Aten

hṭp-k m 3ḥ.t imn.t
t3 m kk m šḥr m mt
sdr.w m šsp(.t) tp.w ḥbs
n ptr ir.t (sn.)nw.t-s
it3-tw ḥ.t-sn nb
ḥr tp.w-sn n 'm-sn
m3i.w nb pr m rw.t<y>-f
ddf.t nb psh-sn
kk ḥ3w t3 m sgr
*p3 ir-sn hṭp m 3ḥ.t-f*³⁴

You set in the western horizon
 and earth is in a darkness like death.
 They sleep in the bedchamber(s), heads covered,
 the eye cannot see a second one.
 They are robbed of all their goods,
 which are under their heads, without them knowing.
 Every lion comes out of his den³².
 Every snake bites.
 Darkness falls³³ and earth is in silence,
 when he who created them rests in his horizon.

³⁰ *b3 n r' hṭp(.w) m k3r-f*, Baud-Drioton, 1928, p. 18-20 and Assmann, 1969, p. 160, no. 53; Assmann, 1983, p. 301.

³¹ Cf. van Dijk, 1989.

³² Literally “gateway”.

³³ Literally “illuminates”.

³⁴ Sandman, 1938, p. 93-96; Davies, 1908, p. 29-31, pls. XXVII and XLI.

Apart from the Great Hymn to the Aten, two similar examples dealing with the image of the sun god setting and of people resting as if they were dead are known outside the proper limits of the Amarna Period. Nonetheless, they belong to the same theology which was actually already circulating in the court of Akhenaten's predecessor. The first example is a hymn addressed to Amun-Ra in his various forms from the granodiorite stela of brothers Suty and Hor (British Museum EA 826), two architects in the service of the king, who indeed lived during the reign of Amenhotep III³⁵. The concerned passage reads: "You set in the Western Mountain and they sleep as if they were dead"³⁶. The second example is the hymn from the stela of Ptah-merit (Leiden V 70)³⁷, probably coming from Saqqara and dating back to the early post-Amarna Period³⁸. There we read: "you set on the horizon and the earth is in impenetrable darkness"³⁹.

Consequently, in these hymns the night is theologically explained with the absence of the god, who at that moment is actually denying his life giving emanation, a concept which is found in the context of the Amarna beliefs only⁴⁰. Therefore, in opposition to the traditional interpretation of sunset as the descent of the sun god in the Netherworld, where he will actually restore the dead with his rays, the Amarna hymns do not mention the sun's subterranean journey.

Although Ra's setting is sometimes described as a descent in the necropolis (the Western Mountain) or in the Duat, it has no negative connotation. The ancient Egyptians could indeed witness his rebirth, namely sunrise, every morning. It was something they knew for certain, so no wonder if they used to describe the god's daily death in positive terms. As a matter of fact, the descent in the West is named "beautiful descent". For instance, in chosen hymns we read:

ind hr-k r' hft wbn-f
*tm m htp-f nfr*⁴¹

Hail to yor, Ra, at his rising;
Atum in his beautiful descent.

³⁵ Fragments of a possible parallel identified by Stewart (1957) are inscribed on the back of the head of a high official's statue, possibly belonging to a dyad statue, and likely dating back to the reign of Amenhotep III.

³⁶ [8] *hṭp-k m mꜣnw m ḳdw-sn mi šḥr mt*. The edition of the text is given in Varille, 1942; Edwards, 1939, p. 22-25, pl. XXI. The full English translation of the stela can be found in Lichtheim, 19756, p. 86-89.

³⁷ Boeser, 1913, p. 7, no. 26, pl. 14;

³⁸ Assmann, 1975, p. 557.

³⁹ *hṭp-k m ḥnw ʒḥ.t-k tꜣ m ḳḳ.w smꜣ.w*. Boser, 1975, p. 14; Assmann, 1975, p. 212, no. 90.

⁴⁰ On this see Assmann, 1995, p. 100 and in particular Assmann, 1992, p. 147-152.

⁴¹ Hymn from TT 41 (tomb of Amenemopet called Ipy), Assmann, 1983, p. 66. A list of further occurrences can be found in Assmann, 1969, p. 263-266 with a full German translation at p. 267.

This is certainly part of the same tradition which considers the necropolis too in positive terms, indeed naming it “the beautiful West” (*imn.tt nfr.t*). Similarly, the disk’s descent is also exalted for his beauty. A passage from a hymn to the setting sun from TT 158 (tomb of Tjanefer) reads:

Hymn to the setting sun from TT 158

<i>ind hr-k r' [hr-3h.ty]</i> <i>hpr pw hpr ds-f</i> <i>nfr-wy htp-k</i> <i>m 3h.t imn.tt nt p.t</i> <i>shd-k dw3.t m stw.t-k</i> ⁴²	Hail to you, Ra-Harakhty, he who is Khepri, the self-generated. How beautiful is your descent in the western horizon of the sky, when you illuminate the Duat with your rays.
---	---

Now that we have explored expressions involving the verb *hṭp* throughout sources of different periods, a brief grammatical explanation is necessary. As a matter of fact, we can observe something interesting in regard to how the sun god’s death is conceived in contrast to that of other gods’. We have seen that divine death when referred to was actually influenced by some restrictions. By examining the death of Osiris, it is possible to appreciate this at best. As a matter of fact, his death is never depicted and, when mentioned, it is always brought up as a concluded event, consequently being set in the past. On the contrary, Ra’s or Atum’s descent is actually set either in a defined or undefined time. The preposition *hft*, “while”, express this concept perfectly. This must be explained with the fact that the ancient Egyptian really used to witness the god’s death in a specific moment (i.e. sunset) but also in an indeterminate time since sunset occurred persistently. This is shown by the pseudoverbal construction *m hṭp*, literally meaning “in descending”, which actually is atemporal. It can indicate past, present, or future actions but, at the same time, implies a statement of fact. It might both be translated as an action in progress or, alternatively, as a future action⁴³. As for this second instance, Ra’s death would appear as something expected and acknowledged by the ancient Egyptian. This is obviously true since they could actually observe with their very eyes the phenomenon of death and rebirth experienced by the sun god daily.

⁴² Assmann, 1983, p. 215.

⁴³ Cf. Allen, 2010, p. 179-180.

4.1.2. The use of verbs other than *hṭp*

Next to the traditional verse describing Ra's death as his setting, other expression do exist. Utterance PT 222 employs the verb *h3*, "to descend" in opposition to *prī*. Once again, the term is not employed directly in reference to the sun god but indicates an action actually performed by the deceased king. He is said indeed to descend with Ra, consequently transferring the action to the sun god. In other words, the subject of the verb and hence the proper performer of the action of descending is the deceased king, not Ra. The concerned passage reads as follows:

PT 222

<i>pr-k h3-k h3w-k hn' r' snkw hn' ndi</i>	You shall ascend, you shall descend, you shall descend with Ra, and darken(?) ⁴⁴ together with <i>ndi</i> ⁴⁵ ,
<i>pr-k h3.w-k pr-k hn' r'</i>	You shall ascend, you shall descent, you shall ascend with Ra.
<i>wbn-k hn' shn-wr</i>	You shall rise with <i>shn-wr</i> ⁴⁶ .
<i>pr-k h3-k h3w-k hn' nb(.t)-hw(-t) snkw hn' msk.tt</i>	You shall ascend, you shall descend, you shall descend with Nephthys, you sink into darkness with the night-bark.
<i>pr-k h3w-k pr-k hn' s.t</i>	You shall ascend, you shall descent, you shall ascend with Isis.
<i>wbn-k hn' m' nd.tt</i> ⁴⁷	You shall rise with the day-bark.

The same applies to a statement found in line § 207a, in which the spell invites the king to purify himself and descend (*h3i*) with Atum⁴⁸. Utterances also attribute the descending (*h3*) indirectly to Ra by means of a comparison with the deceased king, who is standing the sun boat. The king is indeed expected to descend as if he were Ra, namely Ra will descend in his turn. Nonetheless, the descent of Ra is silenced in the first place.

⁴⁴ Topmann in TLA translates *snk.w(i)* "der zur Dunkelheit Gehörige" (accessed 10/2016).

⁴⁵ The sun god is meant. Cf. Wb 2, 367.14; LGG IV, 577.

⁴⁶ Name of a god with whom the deceased king ascends to the sky. Cf. Wb 3, 471.13; LGG VI, 570.

⁴⁷ Transcription based on Sethe, 1908, p. 120-121, §§ 209a – 210c.

⁴⁸ § 207a: *ifh-k 'b(.w)-k n tm [iwn.w h3i-k] hn' -f*, "You shall leave your purification to Atum in Heliopolis and descend with him".

PT 606

<i>h3-k r-k m wī3 pw n r' mrr.w ntr.w i' n-f</i>	You shall descend ⁴⁹ in the bark of Ra to
<i>mrr.w ntr.w h3.t im-f hnn.w r' im-f ir 3h.t</i>	which the gods love to ascend,
<i>h3w N im-f r' is</i> ⁵⁰	in which the gods loves to descend, in
	which Ra is rowed to the horizon,
	in which N shall descend as Ra.

Euphemistic but yet more explicit verbs are employed, once again, in PT 467 when referred to the deceased king who is then compared to Ra. The term used varies from the different versions of this utterance as inscribed in the pyramids of Pepi, Merenra and Neith. Neith's reads the verb *sd3*, whereas the other two have *hpi*, both meaning "to travel" but, according to the context, also "to die"⁵¹. The use of *hpi* in Merenra's and Neith's edition causes a play on word between a term in connection with death and the name of the god Khepri. However, up to this time, Khepri is not yet specifically denoting the form of the newborn morning sun. In order to appreciate the paronomasia, the text given below is Merenra's.

PT 467

<i>psd N⁵² m i3b.t mi r'</i>	N shines in the East like Ra,
<i>hpy-f m imn.t mi hpr⁵³</i>	he goes in the Wets (i.e. dies) ⁵⁴ like Khepri.

The action of Ra's setting is transferred to the deceased king also in PT 469, in which he "rows Ra to the West"⁵⁵; the, in his turn, Ra will establish the king's seat at the head of the lords of kas.

The expression "to go to one's ka" is a well-known euphemism for "to die" and consequently the place of the gods – in this instance, the deceased predecessors of the king – gone to their kas is nothing but the necropolis or, more generally, the West. In PT 475, an utterance about the deceased king going to heaven to serve the sun god, we

⁴⁹ Faulkner translates "go aboard" (1969, p. 250).

⁵⁰ Transcription based on Sethe, 1910, p. 391, §§ 1687 a-c.

⁵¹ As for *sd3* see Wb 4, 377.15-378.11. For *hpi* see Wb 3, 258.3-16, Wb 3, 258.17-259.3; Zandee, 1960, p. 54.

⁵² Pepi has also *pn*.

⁵³ Transcription based on Sethe, 1908, p. 495, §§ 888 a-b.

⁵⁴ Pepi has *sd3*, which has the same meaning, both literally and euphemistically, instead of *hpy* (Merenra) / *hpw* (Neith).

⁵⁵ § 906d: *hny ppi r' ir imn.t*. The same verse is integrated in PT 584 (§1574). Cf. Sethe, 1910, p. 341.

read that the deceased king will protect the sun god in the Netherworld. Such oblique description implies that Ra is actually descending in the West with the king consequently following him. Nevertheless, the sun's proper setting is once again completely silenced.

PT 475

šm-f stp-f sz ʾr r ʿ
m s.t nṯr.w sbw n k3.w-sn

ʿnhw m ʾ3.wt hr ʿnhw m ʾ3.wt stš⁵⁷

He shall go and escort⁵⁶ the sun
in the place of the gods who have gone to their
kas
and who lived in the places of Horus and in the
places of Seth.

In PT 470 Ra is said to go to different places and to find the deceased king there: by coming forth in the East he will find the pharaoh on the horizon, while in the West the deceased king will be living and enduring. In regard to the ascent of Ra in the East the verb *pri* is used, whereas the god's setting in the West is simply described as an arrival by means of the verb *iwi* ("to come"). As for this term, it occurs as a euphemism for passing away in numerous sources⁵⁸. Nevertheless, in this instance, the performer of the action is actually the sun god himself.

PT 470

pr r ʿ m ʾ3b(.t) gm-f N m 3h.t

iw r ʿ ʾr imn(.t) gm-f N im ʿnh dd

bw bw nfr išm r ʿ im gm-f N im⁵⁹

When Ra comes forth from the East, he will
find N on the horizon.

When Ra comes to the West, he will find N
there, living and enduring.

Every beautiful place⁶⁰ in which Ra goes, he
will find N there.

In the early solar hymn from the XI Dynasty limestone stela MMA 13.182.3⁶¹ inscribed with the praise by king Wahankh Antef II to his father Atum⁶², the verb

⁵⁶ Literally "protect".

⁵⁷ Transcription based on Sethe, 1910, p. 28-29, §§ 948 a-c.

⁵⁸ Cf. Zandee, 1960, p. 52.

⁵⁹ Transcription based on Sethe, 1910, p. 8, §§ 919 a-c.

⁶⁰ Literally "the place of places of goodness".

⁶¹ Hayes, 1978, p. 151 and 159, fig. 90. A full English translation is found in Lichtheim, 1975, p. 94-96.

employed to refer to the sun god's departure is *sd3*, meaning "to go" or "to depart" and consequently "to die". It actually is the causative form of *wd3*⁶³, only seldom used in regard to the setting sun. Following the offering formula, the first lines of the hymn, throughout all of which the king asks protection from the darkness of the night, read:

Stela MMA 13.182.3

[2] <i>dd-f sd3-k tr (i)t r'</i>	He says: shall you depart, father Ra,
<i>n wd-k w(i)</i>	before you recommend me?
<i>hbs tw tr p.t</i>	Shall the sky conceal ⁶⁴ you
<i>n wd-k w(i)</i> ⁶⁵	before you recommend me ⁶⁶ ?

In CT 982 the deceased, speaking in the first person, says to unite (*sm3*) with the West as Ra⁶⁷. Also CT 188 reads a similar sentence:

CT 188

<i>ts-i' k3.w n r' m p.t</i>	I will tie the ship's cordage for Ra in the sky,
<i>sm3-f r imn.t nfr.t</i>	and will unite him with the beautiful West.
<i>ts-i' k3.w-i m p.t m' r'</i>	I will tie my cords in the sky like Ra,
<i>sm3-i r imn.t nfr.t</i>	and will unite with the beautiful West.
<i>in n-i nw</i> ⁶⁸	Bring this to me ⁶⁹ !

The idea of uniting with the West as a means of expression for the sun's setting is found in New Kingdom solar hymns too, as a result of the use of the verb *hnm* ("to join" or "to unite with"). It can be followed both by direct object, as customary, or by the preposition *m*.

The title of the first hour of the *Amduat* describes sunset as the entrance through the Western Gate. The verb employed is *k*, which is also attested in regard to the constellations' setting⁷⁰.

⁶² The stela also bears an additional prayer to Hathor.

⁶³ Cf. Assmann, 1969, p. 288.

⁶⁴ Literally "clothe".

⁶⁵ Clère, Vandier, 1948, p. 9, § 15.

⁶⁶ The deceased king expresses the wish to escort the sun god during his nocturnal journey. In regard to these lines cf. pChester-Beatty IV, 9,5; Gardiner, 1935, p. 33; Assmann, 1975, p. 403, no. 195, line 192.

⁶⁷ [VII, 191 e] *sm3-i m r' r imn.t*.

⁶⁸ Transcription based on De Buck, 1947, p. 95 b-e.

⁶⁹ It is the traditional demand for the celestial ferry-boat.

⁷⁰ Wb 1, 230.8

Amduat, title of the first hour

<i>ḳ nṯr pn m 'rry.t imn.t nt 3ḥ.t</i>	This god enters the western door of the horizon.
<i>ḥ' stš r idb iṯr.w</i>	Seth stands on the shore of the river.
<i>120 n spr.t wī3 dw3.t</i>	It is a 120 (miles) voyage for the bark reach the Duat.
<i>pp-f m-ḥt wrns⁷¹</i>	He draws then through to <i>wrns</i> ⁷² .

The beginning of the short version of the *Amduat* resembles the above quoted lines but adds a further detail concerning the location of the nocturnal journey of the sun god, clearly stating that “this great god enters into the earth through the door of the western horizon⁷³”. Nevertheless, the verb employed to describe the descent into the Netherworld is once again *ḳ*.

In other instances, the action of the sun setting can be transferred from the sun god to the West, which is actually said to welcome him. In a way, metaphorically speaking, it is not about the sun god dying but rather the reign of the dead wanting him to join its land. This is how sunset is actually described in the introductory hymn to Ra from the *Book of the Dead*:

BD 15

<i>šsp tw m3nw m ḥtp</i>	The Western Mountain receives you in peace.
<i>ḥpt tw m3 't r tr.wy⁷⁴</i>	Maat embraces you day and night ⁷⁵ .

4.1.3. The use of uncommon expression to refer to the sun setting

Next to more or less veiled references to the moment of sunset, metaphorical and unusual expressions are also attested. We meet the first one of our investigation in PT 456, an utterance in which Ra is greeted. Through the lines, there is no mention of his setting, but he is actually greeted as “the soul which is in his red⁷⁶ (i.e. blood⁷⁷)”. Yet,

⁷¹ Transcription after Hornung, 1963a, p. 3.

⁷² Name of a watercourse in the Netherworld (Wb 1, 333.9).

⁷³ *ḳ nṯr pn m t3 m 'ry.t nt 3ḥ.t imn.t*.

⁷⁴ From the Papyrus of Ani (British Museum EA 10470, sheet one); Budge, 1910, p. 1-3, line 4.

⁷⁵ Literally “in the two times”.

⁷⁶ § 854a: *ind ḥr-k b3 im.y dšr-f*. A second allusion to the sun disk’s red color in particular moments of his daily voyage across the sky is found in PT 254 (*ins.w*, §285.d). As for such utterance, see p. 141.

⁷⁷ The red represents indeed the blood of the slaughter of the god’s enemies. On red as solar color see Kees, 1943, p. 448-452.

this expression is no certain allusion to his death, since it can denote the color of the disc both at sunset and sunrise.

Further metaphors, however, leave no doubt about their true meaning. In PT 254 a passage in particular opposes the deceased king and the sun god. As for the former, the text states that he will physically decay⁷⁸ (*hb*) in the earth, in marked opposition to Ra.

PT 254

<i>is hn-k r sh.t-htp</i>	Go, row to the Field of Offerings,
<i>it-k hpt n hr(.i)-k3.t-f</i>	set the navigation ⁷⁹ to the god perched on his <i>k3.t</i> -tree
<i>i in hnt(y)-mni.t-f hb-k m t3</i>	– so says “he who is presiding over his thigh” ⁸⁰ –
	You enter (i.e. decay) in the earth ⁸¹
<i>r wmt.t-k r mt.t-k r stt.t-k</i>	to your thickness, to your middle, and to your ... ⁸²
<i>m3-k r ‘ m int.wt-f dw3-k r ‘ m</i>	You shall see Ra in his fetters; you shall praise him
<i>prw.t-f int.wt-f</i>	in his exiting from his fetters
<i>m s3 wr im.y ins.w-f</i>	by means of the protection of the Great One which is
	in his red linen ⁸³ ,
<i>nb htp.w di-f n-k ‘-f</i> ⁸⁴	and the Lord of peace shall give you his hand ⁸⁵

In the above quoted utterance, the rising and setting of Ra is referred to by means of the image of him trapped with the “bonds of death⁸⁶”. The sun disk tied up (*m int.wt-f*) corresponds indeed to the setting sun which has descended into the Netherworld, whereas the one set free from bonds (*prw.t-f int.wt-f*) corresponds to the one rising renewed at dawn, when he will be celebrated by the deceased king. Such image is in clear association with one of the most evident effects of death on the corpse, namely stiffening. This fact resulted in its turn in the conception of death as

⁷⁸ On this translation see Zandee, 1960, p. 58 who relates on Sethe’s commentary.

⁷⁹ As the determinatives show, the verb is in connection with navigation. On *iti htp* in the *Pyramid Texts* see Postel, 2003, p. 381-384.

⁸⁰ One of the epithets of Horus in the *Pyramid Texts*, Wb 2, 68.12; LGG V, p. 815-816.

⁸¹ According to Sethe, this would be an allusion to the burial of a king simply consisting in his interment in the earth (1936, p. 323-324); Cf. also Faulkner, 1969, p. 64, note 21.

⁸² The meaning of *stt.t* is unknown. Different translations have been suggested. Mercer (1952a, p. 79): “as to thy length (?)”; Faulkner (1969, p. 64): “to your full span (?)”; Allen (2005, p. 44): “to your shoulders”;

⁸³ It is a reference to the red color of the sun at sunset and dawn by means of which the god provides protection.

⁸⁴ Transcription based on Sethe, 1908, p. 152-153, §§ 284 b – 286 a.

⁸⁵ Unas has ‘-k.

⁸⁶ Zandee, 1960, p. 79.

imprisonment or as being fettered⁸⁷. Consequently, the affirmation that Ra is trapped in bonds would actually parallel the affirmation that he has died. This conception of getting free of ties is well represented in PT 222 (§§ 207a-c) and PT 264 (§§ 349a – 350c), two ascension spells in which the deceased king is unbound from the fastenings, thus allowed to ascend to heaven, and saved from death (i.e. “second death”)⁸⁸.

Another metaphor used to allude to sunset is the image of the sun god disappearing from the faces⁸⁹ of the people. Utterance PT 606 is about the deceased king’s ascension and identification with Ra. In this case all the three daily solar phases are mentioned: sunrise – when N assumes like Ra the form of Khepri –, the arrival at the zenith in the form of Ra, and sunset in the form of Atum. However, what is interesting to note is the pun occurring in § 1695c between the verb *tnm* (“to turn away”) and the root *tm* (“not to be” and “to be complete”) in reference to sunset, and consequently to the daily death of the sun god.

PT 606

shpr-sn N pn mī r‘ m rn-f pw n hpr

They shall cause this N to come into existence like Ra in his name of Khepri.

i‘-k n-sn mī r‘ m rn-f pw n r‘

You shall ascend to them (by day) like Ra in his name of Ra.

*tnm-k m hr-sn mī r‘ m rn-f pw n tm*⁹⁰

You shall turn aside from their faces⁹¹ like Ra in his name of Atum.

The metaphor of the sun vanishing from the sight of people admiring and praising him during the day also occurs in solar hymns from the New Kingdom. In BD 15c the metaphor is stressed by mentioning the fact Ra is being watched until his departure. In this instance, the god’s death is described as a disappearance, being concealed (*imn*) from mankind’s sight.

⁸⁷ Zandee, 1960, p. 78.

⁸⁸ Cf. Zandee, 1960, p. 79-80.

⁸⁹ Cf. Wb 5, 311.15.

⁹⁰ Transcription based on Sethe, 1910, p. 394-5, §§ 1695a-c.

⁹¹ It means that N, and consequently the sun, with whom the king is identified, will vanish from their sight, being no longer visible because of his setting in the evening.

BD 15c

ind hr-k wbn-k m 3h.t-k m r´
htp hr m3´.t d3-k p.t hr nb hr m33-k
šm-k imn m hr-sn
*dī-k tw m dw3.t m m šrw hrw*⁹²

Hail to you Ra when you rise on your horizon,
satisfied in Maat when you cross the sky,
every face watching you.
You go, hiding from their faces,
(when) you put yourself in the Underworld
in the evening of the day.

An interesting assertion is what is written in PT 406. Due to translation ambiguities, this evidence is actually uncertain and is based on the translation of this spell by Allen⁹³. Nevertheless, it is still worth mentioning. As a matter of fact, Allen intends the term *s33/s3.wy* in a completely different way from that of other scholars, who traditionally translate this word “two-third⁹⁴ of gold”. The spelling *s33*, as attested in the *Pyramid Texts*, is generally considered to be the old writing form of *s3.wy*⁹⁵, which actually means “gold of two-thirds fineness”. As for the connection of this material to the sun god, it is likely to be a reference to the disk’s color, which does not have a perfectly golden or yellow shade, being much brighter. It would resemble more like gold alloyed with silver⁹⁶. However, apart from this possible interpretation the use of the term *s33/s3.wy* is still unclear. Whereas in Neith’s version the word has the determinative of gold, the classifier is completely lacking in Teti’s. Otherwise, when followed by the determinative of man with his hand to the mouth, the term belongs to the sphere of wisdom and understanding, meaning “to be wise” or “wise man”⁹⁷. Allen’s translation is constructed on this connotation. The passage reads as follows:

PT 406

*dd mdw ind hr-k r´ m nfr*⁹⁸*-k m nfr.w-k*
*m s.wt-k m s33-k*⁹⁹

Recitation. Hail to you, o Ra, in your perfection, in your finality,
in your places, in your (ultimate) experience¹⁰⁰.

⁹² Budge, 1910, p. 42, lines 16-18.

⁹³ 2005, p. 92-93 and p. 96 note 45.

⁹⁴ On this measure see Sethe, 1916, p. 91-95.

⁹⁵ Wb 4, 16 and 13.10-15.

⁹⁶ Mercer, 1952b, p. 348.

⁹⁷ Wb 4, 16.2-6 and 16.7, respectively.

⁹⁸ So Teti, whereas Neith has ‘*nh*’.

⁹⁹ Transcription based on Sethe, 1908, p. 385, §§ 706 a-b.

¹⁰⁰ Translation by Allen, 2005, p. 92.

According to such interpretation of the text, the sun god would not be exalted for his color resembling that of gold alloyed with silver but would actually be greeted at his setting. The “(ultimate) experience” Allen refers to is sunset, indeed the last phase of the disk’s life. In this way, the expression would be a perfect euphemism for death, a slightly more direct than the typical image of the setting (*hṭp*).

4.2. The sun god said to be going to his ba

The euphemistic expression “to go to one’s ka”(*sm hr k3-f*) or “to go with one’s ka” (*sb hn‘ k3-f*) has been a synonym of “to die” since the Old Kingdom, when it firstly appeared in private tombs of the IV Dynasty. As we have seen in chapter 2¹⁰¹, starting from ancient times it was also used in regard to gods and proved to be quite recurrent especially throughout the *Pyramid Texts*. In that context the deities involved were Horus, Seth, Thoth, Dunau, Osiris, Mechenti-irti to which also Geb is to be added (*Stundenwachen*). In all of these cases, the gods mentioned served as a model for the deceased king, reassuring him while passing away. Nonetheless, the sun god, as a deity symbolizing rejuvenation and rebirth, is never mentioned in such circumstances.

As other fundamental element constituting a person and in particular for its connection with the afterlife, the ba was used as a metaphor for a parallel formula, reading indeed that the deceased goes “to his ba”¹⁰². This last statement is not found in connection with gods, apart from Ra. It occurs in the *Amduat* and precisely in a passage from the concluding text of the second hour. The concerned passage reads as follows:

Amduat, second hour

*i3 sp 2 sb n b3-f š’s ‘pr ii n h3.t-f*¹⁰³

Praised, praised is he who goes to his ba, who goes equipped and comes to his body.

The core of the *Amduat* is indeed the union between Ra – representing the ba – with his corpse – embodied by the dead god Osiris – and such fundamental event takes place in the sixth hour of the night. This aspect is also stressed at the beginning of the composition, when the sun god enters the Netherworld during the first hour of the night

¹⁰¹ See p. 37-47.

¹⁰² For instance, PT 223 (§215.b). See p. 45.

¹⁰³ Transcription after Hornung, 1936a, p. 39.

in a ram-headed form, actually also symbolizing the ba. However, the body (*h3.t-f*) mentioned in the above quoted passage is in reality Osiris. He who is praised when going to his ba is obviously the sun god and such particular expression is actually used to anticipate the reunion with Osiris in the form of Osiris's ba.

4.3. The sun god swallowed by Nut

As we have seen, swallowing a god – thus most likely killing him as sources seem to suggest – was considered to be a medium of absorbing supernatural power. However, in the case of the sun god and his swallowing by Nut this action has the complete opposite meaning: regeneration. As a matter of fact, every night the sun disk enters Nut's mouth, is swallowed by his mother, travels through her body – the representation of a celestial hereafter – during the twelve hours of the night, and is delivered by the sky goddess every morning, rejuvenated. The composition depicting the sun journey is the central element of the so called *Book of the Nut*. So far nine copies of such composition are known, inscribed on the ceilings of royal tombs¹⁰⁴ but also on papyri¹⁰⁵. From the reign of Ramses IV on, it consisted of two images of the sky goddess as a woman arched over the ground and depicted back-to-back on the ceilings of the sarcophagus chamber of the royal tombs (figure 5). The text inscribed next to the face of Nut explains that, entering her mouth, indeed labelled “western horizon”, Ra reaches the Duat. In the same way, Nut's vulva is designated as the “eastern horizon” (figure 4) and captions referring to her backside indeed deal with the regenerated sun god's emergence from the body of the mother goddess.

The Book of Nut

ḳ ḥm n ntr pn m r3-s m ḥnw dw3.t

*wb3 m-ḥt skdd-f m ḥnw-s*¹⁰⁶

The majesty of this god enters in her mouth, in the interior of the Duat.

He emerges¹⁰⁷ after he has travelled inside of her.

¹⁰⁴ They are the Osireion in Abydos (Seti I, XIX Dynasty), the tomb of Ramses IV (KV 2, XX Dynasty), and the non-royal XXVI Dynasty tomb of Mutirdis in Asasif (TT 410).

¹⁰⁵ The complete list of sources is found in Von Lieven, 2007, p. 15-19.

¹⁰⁶ Transcription after the Osireion's version of the composition; Von Lieven, 200, p. 403, §§ 55-56.

¹⁰⁷ Literally “opens”.



Figure 4. Vignette from a coffin in the Rijks-Museum (Leiden), labelling Nut's mouth as "the West" and her vulva as "the East". Source: Piankoff, 1957, p. 48, fig. 32.

However, the traditional terminology which designates the sun disk setting also occurs in the *Book of Nut*. A passage indeed states: "the majesty of this god sets in life in the Duat"¹⁰⁸.

The myth of Nut swallowing the sun – contrary to the image of the sun god "setting in life" or on the western horizon – only occurs once throughout the *Pyramid Texts*. The explanation for this is actually the evident hesitation in dealing with the sun god's death. Despite that his disappearance was acknowledged – and witnessed – as transitory, the ancient Egyptian clearly preferred not to describe it in exhaustive ways or to expatiate upon it, either. Thus, the sole involved spell is PT 563, a purification litany and solar text, which, in its concluding part, actually deals with the ascension of the deceased king as a son of Nut¹⁰⁹. The concerned mention consists in a parallelism, inviting Nut to receive (*šsp*) or to swallow (*'m*) the deceased king just as she does with

¹⁰⁸ [§ 60] *ḥtp ḥm ntr pn m 'nh m dw3.t*; cf. Von Lieven, 2007, p. 405.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Piankoff, 1934, p. 58.

her divine son. Such system is the same that we have seen employed in other utterances from the *Pyramid Texts* to refer to the sun god's descent in the West. Nonetheless, in such instances too, the name of Ra is silenced. The spell actually occurs in two different versions which employ two distinct verbs. In Pepi's pyramid § 1417b has *šsp* ("to receive"), which results in a more neutral connotation when compared with the more explicit *m* ("to swallow"). However, the former is also attested in contexts in which the sun is received in the West at sunset¹¹⁰.

PT 563

N ꜥ pw mtw.t ntr im.y mw.t-ꜥ nw.t N is the divine semen which is in your mother Nut.
i'm n-ꜥ N mīr 'm-ꜥ sꜥ ntr¹¹¹ Swallow N as you swallow your divine son¹¹².

Traditionally, the sun god is said to enter her mouth. Nevertheless, exceptions in the use of this standard formula also exist. The eulogy to Amun-Ra inscribed on the XVIII Dynasty stela of the military scribe Intef (Chicago, Oriental Institute, E 14053) indeed reads as follows:

Stela of Intef

ind hr-k imn-r' Hail to you, Amun-Ra,
mss.w sw inw wnw.t who generates himself every hour,
pr m h.t mw.t-f m-hr-hrw who comes forth the body of his mother every day,
hṭp m hnw-s r nw-f¹¹³ who sets in her in his moment.

In such instance, the death of Ra is described as a setting by means of the use of the verb *hṭp* but, at the same time, the image of Nut swallowing the sun disk is evoked. The last verse is also found in an inscription on the outer wall of TT 57 (tomb of the royal scribe Khaemhat)¹¹⁴. Similarly, in TT 65 (tomb of Nebamun, Overseer of the

¹¹⁰ In BD 15 the arms of the western mountain (*mꜥnw*) are said to receive the sun god (see p. 140); in BD 15BIII the transfigured spirits of the Underworld receive him in his double horizon of the West (*ꜥh.ty-f m imn.t*); in pHarris 5,4 a congregation of jackals receives him in order to tow his bark on the hidden mountain.

¹¹¹ Pepi has *šsp n-ꜥ sw N pn mīr šsp-ꜥ sꜥ ntr*, "Receive him, this N, as you receive (your) divine son".

¹¹² Transcription based on Sethe, 1910, p. 268, §§1417 a-b.

¹¹³ Assmann, 1975, p. 190-191, no. 75; Assmann, 1983, p. 228-229.

¹¹⁴ The line immediately preceding this one is actually missing, but most likely read the same, with the addition of [*tp-dwꜥ*].yt, being the last signs of the word still visible. Hieroglyphic transcription is found in Helck, 1957, p. 1851; transliteration and translation in Assmann, 1983, p. 108-109.

Granary) the hymn addressed to Amun-Ra-Harakhty-Atum reads that the deity is given praises by the gods up to his setting in the body of Nut¹¹⁵ or, alternatively, in the body of his mother¹¹⁶.

Something interesting to remark is the image of death which emerges from such evidence. One of the interpretations that the ancient Egyptians used to give to passing away was actually the return to the womb, represented by the coffin, which, in its turn, was a personification of Nut¹¹⁷. As a consequence, the setting of the sun – which served as model for the development of this concept – is indeed described in solar hymns with the same images and expressions used in the funerary literature to refer to the placing of the deceased's embalmed body in the coffin¹¹⁸.

The fact that being eaten is a necessary precondition for regeneration is also true for the stars. A myth inscribed on the ceiling of the cenotaph of Seti I in Abydos narrates a struggle between Geb and Nut¹¹⁹. As a matter of fact, the earth God is angry with his spouse because she has devoured her children, namely the stars. Consequently, Nut is also designated as a sow eating its piglets. However, her father Shu defends her against Geb, explaining that she is doing it with the purpose of giving a new life to her children. This of course primarily applies to Ra. The stars are indeed said to follow the sun inside of their mother's body, as well as to emerge after him. Nonetheless, despite the promise of rebirth, Geb's reaction at Nut's ingestion of her children seems to suggest their transitory death as something negative.

¹¹⁵ *rdit n-f ntr.w i3.w*
r htp-f m h.t nw.t.

Hieroglyphic transcription, transliteration and translation in Assmann, 1983, p. 128-129.

¹¹⁶ TT 106 (Kitchen, 1975, p. 296 (iii); Assmann, 1983, p. 162):

nm[i-k] hr.t ib-k ndm
r htp m h.t mw.t-k

“You traverse the sky with your heart joyful,
until you set in the body of your mother”.

¹¹⁷ PT 616 (§616d) reads indeed that the deceased is given to his mother Nut “in her name of coffin (*krs.wt*)”. Similarly other texts of the Old Kingdom designate the coffin as “mother” (*mw.t*). Then with the passing of the time the figure of Nut was painted on the inside of the lids, making of the coffin the body of the goddess.

¹¹⁸ Assmann, 2005, p. 174.

¹¹⁹ On this myth see Grapow, 1935.

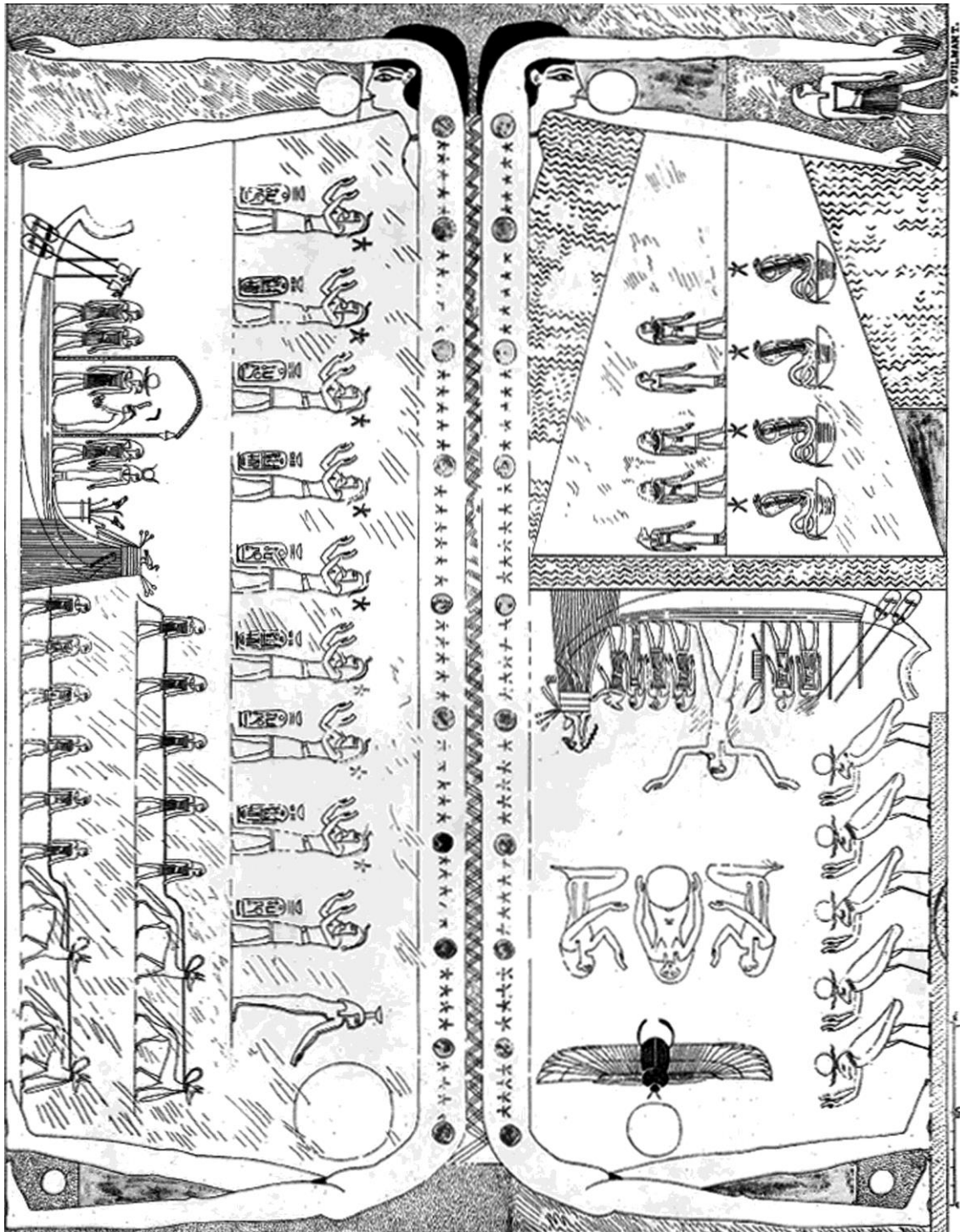


Figure 5. Drawing of the ceiling of the burial chamber of Ramesses IX's tomb in the Valley of the Kings (KV 6), depicting the sky goddess Nut twice. Her double representation as a naked woman arched back-to-back over the ground symbolizes the night (*Book of the Night*, left-hand figure) and day sky (*Book of the Day*, right-hand figure). The twelve-hour journey of the sun god through the sky is represented by means of twelve sun disks in Nut's body. Source: Guilmant, 1907, pl. LXXXVIII.

4.4. Ra said to be dead

In almost all cases, Ra's disappearance is not described as a death and likewise he is not explicitly said to be dead (*mwt.w*). However, some exceptions do exist and sources deal with this in a few and different particular ways. In one of these examples, Ra is described as a god living after dying. Death is openly mentioned only because it is a necessary prerequisite for the god's rebirth. Texts like this refer to the deceased, who expects to live after his death just like the sun god does. Thus, similar statements are found in funerary literature and occur, for instance, in CT 423, namely a spell for not dying a second death, as well as in BD 3, BD 38A, and BD 41.

CT 423

'nh N m-ht mt mī r' hrw nb
'nh N (m-ht)¹²⁰ mt¹²¹

May N live after death like Ra every day,
may N live after death¹²².

BD 3

'nh N m-ht mwt-f mī r' hrw nb¹²³

May N live after his death like Ra every day.

BD 41

'nh-i hm m-ht mwt mī r' hrw nb¹²⁴

I live indeed after death like Ra every day.

Similarly, CT 438¹²⁵, indeed a spell to live after death, refers to the sun god in his form of Atum, who likewise is said to live after death every day. Basically, Ra's death is indirectly recalled by means of a comparison with the deceased. Nevertheless,

¹²⁰ The omission of *m-ht* is due to the end of N's name, *ḏhwtj-nht*.

¹²¹ Transcription based on B2Bo (inner coffin of *ḏhwtj-nht*, Boston 21.962a), which refers to the deceased in the third person. On the contrary, in S2C it is actually the deceased himself speaking. De Buck, 1954, p. 263 a-b.

¹²² Other coffins also suggest a second interpretation according to a different possibility of translation. In the case of B4Bo 'nh occurring in the second verse is intended as active participle referring to Ra. However, the passage from B4Bo reads:

'nh N tn mī r' hrw nb
'nh m-ht mt

May this N live every day like Ra,
who (i.e. Ra) lives after his death.

¹²³ Transcription based on the papyrus of Nu (Budge, 1899, pl. 26).

¹²⁴ Transcription based on the papyrus of Nu (Budge, 1899, pl. 10).

¹²⁵ The concerned passage (V, 291 k) reads:

whm s'nh m-ht mt mī itm r' nb.

May I live again after death like Atum every day.

next to the above quoted explicit expressions, more euphemistic ones exist, such as CT 506. As a matter of fact, in such utterance we read that “departing is like returning – and *vice versa* – like Ra¹²⁶”. In this context the verb *šm* is obviously a synonym of “dying”.

A completely different example is the menace found in CT 1100. The intimidation to gods sometimes occurs in magical practices as a medium for the magician to actually obtain what he wants from the gods. Texts never say how such threats were supposed to be achieved. However, this practice was not restricted to magical texts but is also found in funerary literature¹²⁷, starting from the *Pyramid Texts*, and, in such instance, menaces are uttered by the deceased himself. In some cases, he affirms to know the secret name of the god, the source of his power. Besides, he also makes promises to them. Consequently, if deities and other supernatural being had helped him, they would have benefitted from the situation; but, if they had not, they would have been denied offerings, for example. On the contrary, in other cases, such as in CT 1100, the entire universe would have been in danger. Here, the menace of the deceased is addressed to the keeper (*ir.y*) of the outer gate (*‘rr.yt h3.t*):

CT 1100

<i>m h3w hr-i</i>	Do not come down against me!
<i>dwn-h3.t rs hr</i>	You who stretch out his muzzle ¹²⁸ , be vigilant.
<i>im n hpr-f h3ti m hnmm.t hrw dst ntr</i>	Do not let cloudiness come into existence among the sun-folk on the day of clearing ¹²⁹ the god ¹³⁰ .
<i>ir iwt-k r-i</i>	If you come against me
<i>m hf3.wt nb</i>	as any snake,
<i>mt k3 r‘</i>	then Ra will die
<i>sft k3 ‘3pp¹³¹</i>	and Apophis will be slaughtered ¹³² .

The possibility of causing Ra’s death is just a groundless menace and such an event will actually never occur. Nevertheless, the text shows no restraint when it came

¹²⁶[VI, 91 m] *iwt šmt mī iw t3s-phr mī r‘*.

¹²⁷On threats to gods in religious literature see Grapow, 1911.

¹²⁸Name of a gatekeeper in the Underworld (Wb 5, 432.17).

¹²⁹Faulkner (1978, p. 157) suggests this translation for *dst* on the base of CT 50 (I, 223a).

¹³⁰Since the deceased demands a sky clear of cloud, according to the context, the god in question has necessarily to be Ra (Faulkner, 1978, p. 157).

¹³¹Transcription based on De Buck, 1961, p. 417 c – 419 c.

¹³²Faulkner reads instead *snt* “to be hostile” (1978, p. 157). However, to threaten the cosmic order, we would expect a completely different statement, actually meaning the opposite, namely that Apophis would triumph over Ra.

to dealing with it, using no periphrases or euphemisms. Such a brutality is obviously necessary for strengthening the intimidation. Yet, CT 586 too expresses the same concept but, contrarily to CT 1100, actually employs a euphemistic expression. The deceased speaks and says: “If I will grow weary, Ra will grow weary¹³³”. The verb *wrd* is the one typically used in regards to Osiris who is “the weary of heart”.

Similarly, CT 1138, a spell from the *Book of the Two Ways*, states that Ra-Atum is dead (*mwt*). This composition – especially known from coffins from the Middle Kingdom necropolis of Deir el-Bersha – deals with the deceased’s journey through the Duat and also provides him with a graphical representation of the Netherworld. What differentiates this composition from the later Netherworld guides is the fact that it does not actually commence with sunset but rather with the eastern horizon and sunrise, consequently causing the journey through the hereafter to primarily take place in the sky. However, CT 1138 is an utterance in which the deceased opens darkness along with passing through flaming doors and by demons. Accordingly, also the sun god has set in the western horizon and is now traversing the Netherworld as well.

CT 1138

<i>r‘-tm mwt</i>	Ra-Atum is dead ¹³⁴ .
<i>ht ht</i>	Fire! Fire!
<i>iw-n-i wsr-i hn‘ tn</i>	I have come that I may be powerful with you.
<i>in 3d pw dmd hsf hr</i>	It is the aggressor who is joined with him of the averted face,
<i>wd‘ir ir.t kky.t sw3</i>	when Seth ¹³⁵ , who made the eye of darkness, passed by.
<i>N pn nhm hm</i>	This N is he who demolishes.
<i>nb‘w3 m-ht-i</i>	The lord of robbery is behind me.
<i>N pw sw3 wb3 kk.w</i>	N is he who passes by and who opens darkness.
<i>sd.t n whm m im-f</i>	Fire is that which has no power over him
<i>m ky m grh</i>	as anyone else who belongs to the night
<i>nnk t wb3-n-i kk.w¹³⁶</i>	The <i>trp</i> -goose ¹³⁷ belongs to me. I opened darkness.

¹³³ [VI 208 b] *wrd-i wrd r‘*.

¹³⁴ Lesko translates “the sledge of Re” (1977, p. 31).

¹³⁵ *wd‘* (“he who is judged”) is a typical designation of Seth which is found in the *Coffin Texts* (cf. Wb 1, 407.2). B5C has instead the recumbent Sethian animal.

¹³⁶ Transcription based on De Buck, 1961, 483 j – 484 g.

¹³⁷ Written with *t* and the *sz*-bird determinative. Cf. Wb 5, 337; Wb 5, 387.6-9

4.5. Old age and consequent departure

Growing old was likely part of the divine nature of deities too¹³⁸. The sun god is certainly the best representative of this idea, but as suggested by a passage from the *Stundenwachen* this idea possibly extended to all the gods as well. Atum, the form of the sun god in the evening, is indeed portrayed in vignettes of the Underworld books as an elderly man leaning on a stick, an image immediately suggesting the idea of old age. Such a depiction is a unique case in the entire ancient Egyptian artistic repertoire and was justified by the promise of rebirth which necessarily follows the sun god's old age.

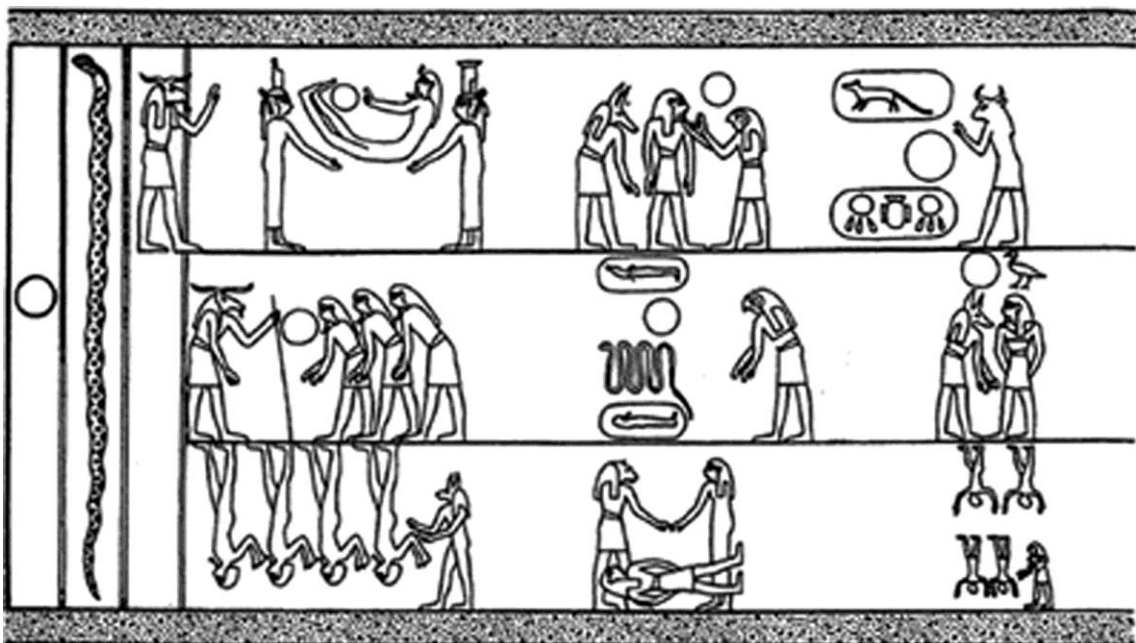


Figure 6. Vignette from the fourth section of the *Book of Caverns* from the tomb of Ramesses VI in the Valley of the Kings (KV 9). In the middle register the ram-headed god Atum is depicted while leaning on a staff opposite of three forms of Osiris. The upper register shows Osiris lifted by Isis and Nephthys in preparation for his resurrection along with the care for him by Anubis and Horus. The lower register represents the punishment of the enemies. Source: Hornung, 1999, p. 94, fig. 50.

As for literature, the idea of old age is accepted but not discussed. Designation of the sun as an old men are frequent throughout the written sources¹³⁹. In texts apart from solar hymns, such as the *Book of the Heavenly Cow* and the *Tale of Isis and Ra* – the sun god is depicted as an old deity, and, even though not described in unambiguous

¹³⁸ See p. 23-28.

¹³⁹ Examples of solar cycle and old age are numerous and many of them can be found conveniently in Assman's collection of hymns and prayers (1975): no. 104, 52; no. 127 A, 12-13; no. 127 B, 57; no. 130, 24; no. 131, 21; no. 131, 53-55; no. 144C, 67-68; no. 195, no. 184; no. 225, 6-8.

terms, is at least imagined as such¹⁴⁰. As for the connection between growing old and dying, solar hymns are contradictory on this matter. As a matter of fact, they state both that Ra is untiring¹⁴¹ and that he sets after concluding his time. Such affirmations are found indeed in connection with the idea of the sun god spending his youth and of rejuvenating after achieving old age. Nevertheless, even the explicit connection between old age and the sun's death is less recurrent, as if denying it. The example of pBerlin 3049 and the hymn to Sobek-Ra, in both of which growing old and setting are quoted next to each other in a close and logical association, have already been quoted above¹⁴². Despite these instances, the idea that the sun god is subjected to time was also expressed in more neutral terms and often, as obvious, in association with the consequent notion of rejuvenation. This topic has already been hinted in the second chapter of this paper¹⁴³.

Despite that the ancient Egyptians were familiar with the idea of the sun god growing old, texts are still quite reticent to deal with it. The fact that Ra has grown old and is thus unfitted to reign over Egypt is sometimes alluded in a later time. The well-known case of the *Book of the Heavenly Cow* – name by which the narrative is conventionally called since its original title is unknown – is actually not the only one. Nevertheless, it is certainly one of the most explicit in terms of physical description of the mature god. The composition, also known to scholars with the title of *the Destruction of Mankind*, is a book firstly recorded, even though incompletely, on the outermost of the four gilded shrine of Tutankhamun¹⁴⁴. Besides, it occurs in four additional royal tombs, namely those of Seti I (KV 17)¹⁴⁵, Ramesses II (KV 7), Ramesses III (KV 11) and Ramesses VI (KV 9). The text has subsidiary room completely reserved to it, whereas in the case of the tomb of Ramesses VI, which actually has no annex, an excerpt is recorded in the left niche of the third corridor¹⁴⁶. Apart from these tombs, a brief quotation of the composition is found on two Ramesside

¹⁴⁰ For this aspect of the sun god see below, p. 155-157.

¹⁴¹ For instance in the decree of Amun in favor of the queen Nes-khons (Cairo Museum CG 58032) we read that the sun god traverses the sky without tiring (Golénischeff, 1927, p. 173, line 7; Assmann, 1975, p. 310, nr. 131).

¹⁴² See p. 132.

¹⁴³ See p. 26-27.

¹⁴⁴ According to Spalinger (2000, p. 281-282), key linguistic element would suggest a composition to the middle of the XVIII Dynasty and before the Amarna Period.

¹⁴⁵ A fragment of wall relief reading the beginning of the ritual recorded in the last part of book, probably from this tomb, is conserved in the Musée Calvet in Avignon (inventory no. A8). The fragment has been published in Guilhou, 1998b.

¹⁴⁶ Hornung, 1999, p. 148-149.

papyri from Deir el-Medina in the Turin Museum, i.e. cat. 1982¹⁴⁷ and cat. 1826¹⁴⁸. A later version of the myth has then been integrated in the so called *Book of Fayum*¹⁴⁹ dating back to the Roman Period and differing in many ways from the original version¹⁵⁰. The composition has an etiological meaning and its purpose was indeed that of explaining the events that lead to the current state of the world as well as to the separation of gods and mankind, revealing its causes. As a matter of fact, as a consequence of the rebellion narrated in the myth, the sun gods reorganized the cosmos completely. The myth can be intended as an attempt to justify the king's death too.

The story starts after the creation of the world and of all its creatures, when divine and human being were still united. At a certain point of his existence, in the same way in which the sun grows old in the sky daily, Ra grows old while dwelling on earth, but the cyclical process aimed at his regeneration does not exist yet, along with the alternation between day and night. Because of this, humanity rebels against Ra, who, after consulting with the primeval deities, decides to send his eye, namely the goddess Hathor, on the earth to punish humankind. After a partial extermination, the sun god calls back Hathor by means of a trick and decides to abandon earth by withdrawing to the sky on the back of the heavenly cow. Gods and men are now divided and divine beings abandon the earth. The cosmos is consequently newly organized in three layers, namely the sky, the earth and the Duat. The reorganization of the world brings about the daily cycle of the sun, causing the alternation of day and night along with the establishment of the Netherworld, in which the sun must necessarily descend at night from now on¹⁵¹. At the very beginning of the book we find the description of the aged god (§§ 1-7):

The Book of the Heavenly Cow

hpr [s]w [wbn] r' ntr hpr ds.f

m-ht wnn-f m nsw.yt

r(m)t ntr.w m ht w'.t

So, after Ra came into existence, the god
generated by himself,
and after he has become king,
men and gods being one sole thing,

¹⁴⁷ Pleyte, Rossi (1869-1876b), pl. 84.

¹⁴⁸ Roccati, 1984, p. 23 and p. 27, note 35.

¹⁴⁹ This designation has become standard since Beinlich's publication (1991) of the material which was up to that moment. It consists of a group of texts from the Graeco-Roman Period dealing with the description of the Fayum district.

¹⁵⁰ On this version see Beinlich, 1991, p. 314-319 and on the relationship between the myth and the region see in particular p. 315-316.

¹⁵¹ For a general introduction, as well as for a translation of the whole narrative, see Hornung, 1982b.

wn-in r(m)t hr k3.t mdw.t r-*hft* r'
 istw r-f hm-f 'nh.w wd3.w snb.w izw.w
 ks.w-f m *hd*
 h'.w-f m nb.w
 sni-f m hsb d m3'.t¹⁵³

people were thinking about words against Ra.
 Now, his majesty l.h.s. has grown old¹⁵²;
 his bones were of silver,
 his flesh of gold,
 his hair of genuine lapis lazuli¹⁵⁴.

The description of Ra as a god made of precious materials actually gives no revealing hint about the aspect of a mature god¹⁵⁵. This description actually suits every god¹⁵⁶, regardless of his age, and the characteristic attributed to Ra by the text are absolutely not related to old age. As a matter of fact, bones made of silver as well as golden flesh are symbols of eternal youth, the former as important as the latter in religious texts, and both of them were considered to be everlasting and divine¹⁵⁷. Similarly, the lapis lazuli of the god's hair is not indicative of his decline but actually is a symbol of celestial regeneration, likely recalling the darkness of the night which precedes the new-born sun each day¹⁵⁸. A very similar description is found indeed in four further sources, namely the Harris magical papyrus (IV, 8¹⁵⁹), papyrus Boulaq 2¹⁶⁰, a hymn addressed to Ra by Darius from the Hibis Temple in el-Khargeh oasis¹⁶¹, and, last but not least in an inscription from the temple of Esna¹⁶². All the four of them read that the god's bones are made of silver, his flesh of gold, and his hair¹⁶³ of lapis lazuli.

¹⁵² The stative form *izw.w* stresses the god's status as well as the fact that the action has already occurred.

¹⁵³ The first edition of the text, accompanied by a French translation, is given in Naville, 1876 and is based on the version recorded in the tomb of Seti I. The first synoptic edition of the monumental versions is in found in Maystre, 1941.

¹⁵⁴ The version of the *Book of Fayum*, differing in the previous lines, also adds some further details. The text is edited in Beinlich, 1991, p. 148.

sw r' hms m d.t-f ds-f
 i(3)w-f im ks.w-f m *hd*
 h3.w-f m nb sni.w-f m hsb d
 ir.ty-f m w3d.wyitn nfr n mfk(3.t)

So, Ra was seated in his own bodily form.
 He was old, his bones were of silver,
 his flesh of gold, his hair of lapis lazuli,
 his eyes of malachite and his beautiful disk of turquoise.

¹⁵⁵ Yet, Hornung defines such a description "an elegant metaphor for the complete ossification of the aged deity" (1982, p. 154).

¹⁵⁶ Seth is an exception since his bones were believed to be of iron, as Plutarch wrote (*De Iside et Osiride*, §62), a material (*bi3*, "copper" or "iron") which, according to PT 21 (§ 14a), "comes out from Seth". On this topic see Wainwright, 1932, p. 14.

¹⁵⁷ On divine silver skeleton see Aufrère, 1991, p. 412-413.

¹⁵⁸ Guilhou, 1989, p. 27.

¹⁵⁹ Lange, 1927, p. 38-43.

¹⁶⁰ Edited by Mariette, 1871.

¹⁶¹ The hymn is inscribed on the south wall of the hypostyle hall. Davies, 1953, pl. 33; Assmann, 1975, p. 300-308.

¹⁶² Esna 272,1-4; Sauneron, 1962, p. 142-143; Sauneron, 1968, p. 174.

¹⁶³ The Harris papyrus as well as the inscription from el-Khargeh read *hr.yw-tp* and *hr.y-tp*, respectively, instead of *snī*.

Whereas in pHarris and in the inscription from el-Khargeh¹⁶⁴ the physical description of the god is not associated with his old age, pBoulaq 2 is more similar to the passage from the *Book of the Heavenly Cow*, associating the concerned depiction with the god's old age. There we read:

pBoulaq 2

ḥmn ḥpr m nw.w n.w w3ḏ-wr

The eight are in their form inside the waters of the sea.

*sw r' ḥms(.y) m ḏ.t-f ḏsf i3w*¹⁶⁵

They are Ra, who sits in his body form, he himself an old one:

ks.w-f m ḥḏ ḥ'w-f m nb šni-f m ḥsbd

his bones made of silver, his flesh of gold, his hair of lapis lazuli,

*ir.ty-f m w3ḏ.ty itn nfr n mfk(3.t)*¹⁶⁶

his eyes of malachite¹⁶⁷. The beautiful sun disc (is made) of turquoise.

However, in pBoulaq 2, as well as in the *Book of the Heavenly Cow*, the sun god's old age is simply suggested, not described¹⁶⁸. In fact, it seems to be somehow rejected.

A mention of Ra's old age is also found in an inscription from the Ptolemaic temple of Esna dealing with the ritual of the second day of Khoiak and with the presentation of succession. Nonetheless, in such instance Ra is simply said to be an old one¹⁶⁹.

Differently, in the version of the litany of the twelve names of Ra-Harakhty as recorded on the walls of the pronaos of the temple of Edfu – dating back to the reign of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II – the sun god, identified with Horus, is actually addressed as an old man whose bones are ill¹⁷⁰. This would suggest the idea of physical deterioration due to human old age.

¹⁶⁴ It adds further informations to the depiction of Ra, reading that his teeth (*ḏs.w*) are made of turquoise (*mfk3*).

¹⁶⁵ The spelling given in the text is typical of the Graeco-Roman Period (cf. Wb 1, 29.1-2).

¹⁶⁶ Transcription after Mariette, 1871, pl. 2.

¹⁶⁷ For the translation of *w3ḏ*, meaning “green stone” in a generic way, see Aufrère, 1991, p. 543.

¹⁶⁸ Guilhou dedicated a brief paragraph to this aspect (1989, p. 84-85).

¹⁶⁹ Esna 348, 28: *iw-f m i3w*. Sauneron, 1968, p. 294 and 1962, p. 64.

¹⁷⁰ *i hr pw sms i3w n i3w-f ḏr mn ks.w-f rf*, “Oh, is Horus the elder, the old one in his old age since his boned are ill”; cf. Gasse, 1894, p. 210-211. This litany also occurs in earlier sources such as pChester-Beatty VIII (XX Dynasty) and the Papyrus of Luyne (XXI Dynasty), both addressing the sun god also in his form of old Horus. The latter does not mention this aspect of his old age, whereas the former actually presents a lacuna exactly where this statement might have existed.

In opposition to the *Book of the Heavenly Cow*, a more picturesque account is given in the *Tale of Isis and Ra*, in which the sun god is so old that spit drops off his mouth. Such a disrespectful portrait actually corresponds to the Ramesside taste for exaggeration¹⁷¹ and almost results in a mockery.

The tale of Isis and Ra

<i>i3wt ntry nw-n-f r3-f</i>	The divine old man drooled from his mouth,
<i>sty-f nbi-f r t3</i>	he poured his spittle to the ground.
<i>pgs-n(-f) sw shr(.w) hr s3ty</i> ¹⁷²	He spat it and it has fallen on the floor.

Nevertheless, in the *Book of the Heavenly Cow*, after halving and submitting humankind again, Ra leaves the earth for the sky, bringing on the alternation of day and night, and hence starting his daily cycle of death and subsequent rebirth. As a matter of fact, the sun god, sick of humanity, sets into the sky, on the back of the heavenly cow, i.e. the goddess Nut, apparently leaving his reign to the other gods. Something similar is narrated in a text likely dating back to the XXX Dynasty¹⁷³ and engraved on the shrine of Ismailia (el-‘Arish, naos 2248)¹⁷⁴. The text deals with the succession of reigns of gods and with that of Geb in particular. However, the composition opens as follows:

Naos of Ismailia

<i>wnn hm n šw m nswt nfr n</i>	The majesty of Shu was a perfect king of
<i>p.t t3 dw3.t mw t3w mw dw.w w3d[-wr]</i>	sky, earth, water, wind, primeval water,
	mountains and [sea],
<i>[ir tp.]t-rd.w hr g(3i).i nty it-fr ‘-hr-</i>	[making] all his tasks on the throne ¹⁷⁶ of his
<i>3h.ty m m3 ‘ hrw</i> ¹⁷⁵	father Ra-Harakhty, become true of voice.

Here, the succession of Shu on the throne of his father Ra is mentioned. The idea of gods leaving the reign to a successor is not exclusive of the Late Period but is already found in the XIX Dynasty Papyrus of Turin, which indeed records a series of divine rulers preceding the terrestrial kings. Yet, the papyrus is simply a list of sovereign,

¹⁷¹ Hornung, 1982, p. 154.

¹⁷² Hieroglyphic transcription in Budge, 1904, p. 374.

¹⁷³ See p. 25-26 and 223-224.

¹⁷⁴ The text inscribed on the naos has been edited by Goyon, 1936.

¹⁷⁵ Transcription after Goyon, 1936, p. 7.

¹⁷⁶ Literally “shrine”.

accompanied by the registration of their rule's length, and thus gives no further information on how a new deity replaced his predecessor. On one hand, this evidence might suggest that gods were believed to grow old and, at a certain point, to die of old age¹⁷⁷. Now, what is interesting in the above quoted passage is that Shu is said to become king because his father Ra-Harakhty has become true of voice. As for *m3' hrw*, according to the context, its only thinkable meaning is that the expression is indeed used as a euphemism for the god's death, possibly arrived after reaching old age. This might mean either that the sun god is weary and needs to be regenerated – his departure actually corresponding to his withdrawal as narrated in the *Book of the Heavenly Cow* – or that Ra-Harakhty simply passed away since all the gods have to grow old soon or later. The last possibility is apparently suggested by a farther passage of the text, unfortunately full of lacunae. The lines in question concern the account of Shu's reign before his departure to heaven and the enthronement of Geb¹⁷⁸. The idea of Shu leaving the earth for heaven is either, once again, a euphemism for his death or alternatively is to be intended literally, simply meaning that he withdrew to the sky in order to leave his earthly domain to his son but without actually dying. However, such myth might hide a political meaning. Sadly, the passage is interrupted by an extended lacuna and the reading is doubtful. As for Ra's departure for heaven, no information is given on how this happened. If the reason of his withdrawal was actually old age, his form of Ra-Atum would have been more suited for the context. Harakhty is indeed the form of the sun when rising in the sky, being the *3h.t* the place where Ra emerges from the Duat to appear over the horizon. Nevertheless, in a later time this term was also employed to denote the location in which the sun sets¹⁷⁹.

4.6. The assassination attempt of Ra

To provide their concrete functioning, magical texts recall a pretended mythical antecedent and numerous are the cases dealing with incantation to remove poison from a patient. The most famous instance in whole ancient Egyptian literature is probably the story of Horus as a child bitten by a serpent, whose complete account is found on the Metternich stela¹⁸⁰. However, a similar faith is met by the sun god in a spell dealing

¹⁷⁷ On the Turin king list as possible demonstration of gods' old age see p. 24-25.

¹⁷⁸ However the succession of the two has likely a political meaning. See p. 223-224.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Wb 1, 17.I.

¹⁸⁰ See p. 258-261.

indeed with snake poison¹⁸¹. The myth in question is known from different sources from Deir el-Medina: Papyrus Turin 1993¹⁸² – which is the most complete version of the composition –, Papyrus Chester Beatty XI (British Museum EA 10691)¹⁸³, Ostrakon Petrie 7 (UC 39610)¹⁸⁴, Ostrakon Deir el-Medina 1263¹⁸⁵, and last but not least Ostrakon Queen's College Oxford 1116. The story narrates how Isis, by means of a cunning trick, persuades Ra to reveal her his secret name. To achieve her aim the goddess shapes indeed a magical serpent out of the earth on which the spit of the aged sun god has fallen. Then, she places it on Ra's daily path and, when the sun god approaches, the snake bites him. The serpent's poison causes Ra the greatest suffering he has ever felt. Hence, the goddess approaches him in his suffering and tells him that she will heal him on condition that he will reveal her his secret name. The sun god tries to cheat her by listing some others of his names but the pain grows stronger and in the end Ra has to surrender. As soon as he reveals Isis his secret name, causing her to become his equal, the goddess heals him, saving his life. Similarly to the story of Horus recorded on the Metternich stela and to other parallels, the god actually does not die but comes really close to death. The poison would certainly have killed him if he did not relent and reveal his name. The way in which the text deals with the sun god's suffering, a vividness demanded by this kind of texts, leaves indeed no doubt about it. Moreover, the symptoms experienced by Ra correspond to the one which affect people in case of snake bite, namely general symptoms such as loss of strength, spasms, facial twitches, facial edema, widespread bleeding, hebetude, fever, and thirst; and local ones such as local edema, serous production, local bleeding, and tissue necrosis¹⁸⁶. The sun god is not experiencing all of them; yet, he describes some of his sensations, such as burning (i.e. fever), shaking, sweating, aphasia and weakness. As for this, fever is the only symptom due to snake bite which is sometimes indicated by sources as nonfatal¹⁸⁷.

¹⁸¹ The title is only found in papyrus Turin 1993 and reads: "Spell for warding off poison (*mtw.t*) from the primeval period, when beings came into existence against it who knew its nature".

¹⁸² Published by Pleyte, Rossi, 1869-1876, pl. 31, 77, 131-133 who also give a French translation at p. 173-177. The papyrus has been dated to the XX Dynasty.

¹⁸³ Gardiner, 1935, p. 116-118, pls. 64-65. The papyrus dates back to the XIX Dynasty.

¹⁸⁴ Černý, Gardiner, 1957, pl. 3.2.

¹⁸⁵ Posener, 1951, p. 42, pl. 69 and 69a.

¹⁸⁶ The symptoms listed are the ones acknowledged by the Ancient Egyptians. Cf. Sauneron, 1989, p. 173-179.

¹⁸⁷ Sauneron, 1989, p. 176 and 5²⁷.

The Tale of Isis and Ra

nn gm-n-f [mdw] r wšb hr-f
ir.ty 'r.ty-fy hr htht
'wt-f nb istyty¹⁸⁹
mtw.t itt-n-f m iw-fy
mī itt h'p m h.t-f¹⁹⁰

He did not find the words to answer to it¹⁸⁸.
 His jaws were flinching,
 (and) all his limbs trembling.
 The poison took his body
 like the Nile takes in his river bed.

nn dp-tw mn.t mitt st
nn mr r-s¹⁹¹

Never has been tasted a suffering like this.
 There is no suffering (greater) than this.

Ra explains what has happened and describes his symptoms to the Ennead:

pr.k(wi) r h3 r m3 ir-n-i
swtw t m t3.wy km3-n-i

m ddm hr-i
nn rh-i sw
nn h.t is pw
nn mw is pw
ib-i hry ht h'w-i istyty
'wt(-i) hry ms.w hsyw¹⁹²

I went outside to see what I made
 and walked about the two lands which I
 created,
 when (something) stung me.
 I do not know it:
 it is not fire,
 it is not water.
 My heart is on fire, my limbs are trembling,
 my members are under the manifestations of
 cold¹⁹³.

The goddess Isis arrives and the sun god repeats to her what he has explained short
 before to the ennead:

nn h.t is pw
nn mw is pw
kbb.kwi r mw
šmm.kwi r sd.t
h'w-i nb r hry ff.t¹⁹⁴
tw-i istyty
ir.t-i nn smn.ti
nn gmh-i p.t
hw mw hr hr-i m šmw¹⁹⁵

It is not fire,
 it is not water.
 I am colder than water
 and hotter than fire.
 All my limbs are covered in sweat.
 I tremble.
 My eye is not stable.
 I cannot see the sky
 (since) water floods my face (like) in the Shemu-
 season (i.e. summer).

¹⁸⁸ In the previous sentences the Ennead asks Ra what is wrong with him.

¹⁸⁹ Read *sd3d3* (Cf. Wb 4, 366-367.7). The same spelling occurs twice in the passages quoted below.

¹⁹⁰ Transcription based on Budge, 1904, p. 376.

¹⁹¹ Transcription based on Budge, 1904, p. 377.

¹⁹² Transcription based on Budge, 1904, p. 379.

¹⁹³ It means that the god's limbs are shaking.

¹⁹⁴ Read *fd.t*.

¹⁹⁵ Transcription based on Budge, 1904, p. 381-382.

When Ra hesitates in telling Isis his real name, his suffering intensifies, demonstrating that a god can experience pain and that, if not cured, poison would likely cause him a violent death:

mtw.t ḏdm st m ḏdm
*shm-n-s r nbl.t n ḥ*¹⁹⁶

The poison stung in its stinging.
 It was stronger than the flame of the brazier.

However, the primary aim of such myth is ritual. As a matter of fact, if recorded on a papyrus, dissolved in water, and drunk as medicament, the myth would heal from snake venom by means of his magical power. Consequently, in this instance, the sufferings of the god are fictitious, since a death different from that of setting was not even conceived by the ancient Egyptians with regards to Ra.

4.7. Summary and cross references

The sun god certainly is the most evident symbol of death and rebirth. People used to witness his dying and his emerging, renewed, from the domain of the death every morning. Consequently, as a god, Ra not only was the perfect promise of regeneration but also was the proof that people were granted an afterlife. As such an important symbol, Ra was particularly worshipped and countless hymns were dedicated to his setting and rising respectively. The most common verb employed to designate his temporary death is *ḥtp*, meaning “to set” or even “to rest”, which sometimes is accompanied by a further specification such as “setting in life”, “in the western mountain”, “in the necropolis”, etc. From a grammatical point of view, the pseudoverbal construction *m ḥtp* is atemporal and also indicates a statement of fact. Contrary to the death of Osiris, which is referred to as an event far away in time (“the day of”), Ra’s does not need to be located in a certain moment of the past, since it actually occurs perpetually. As a matter of fact, by means of the pseudoverbal construction past, present or future actions are equally meant.

Ra’s death appears in literature as early as the *Pyramid Texts*. Nonetheless, in what seems to be the oldest ever composed sun hymn (PT 587) the sun setting is actually not mentioned. On the contrary, other utterances refer to the event mainly indirectly, comparing the deceased king’s setting to Ra’s. Besides, the *Pyramid Texts*

¹⁹⁶ Transcription based on Budge, 1904, p. 384-385.

prefer to use verbs other than *hṯp*, which will actually be the standard form from the Middle Kingdom and a constant in solar hymns of the New Kingdom, the period in which this kind of text indeed reaches its climax. Yet, such verbs still focus on the idea of descending in the West, namely in the Underworld, which the sun god will traverse during the night, when his disk is not visible to people. Some unusual and metaphorical expressions also exist.

Parallel to this, is a second tradition, whose origin is likely to be traced back to the Old Kingdom, namely the death of the sun god conceived as ingestion by the sky goddess Nut.

As part of the cycle of life, a further tradition acknowledged the god's old age. His representation in the form of Atum indeed depicts him as an old deity leaning heavily on a stick. Considering the magical power of the written word and of images, such representation was allowed only because of the promise of rebirth that the god's consequent death brought along. Literary sources also deal with this aspect, but the god's description as old being has no feature traditionally belonging to oldness. On the contrary, the materials believed to make up the body of the old deity are symbols of eternal youth and celestial rebirth (*Book of the Heavenly Cow*, pBoulaq 2, pHarris, and the solar hymn from the temple of Hibis). So, practically, the concept is accepted but rejected at the same time.

Explicit statements that the god can possibly die have a strong meaning. They can prove to be menaces to assure protection to the deceased (CT 1100). In an account working as mythical antecedent, aimed at demonstrating the effectiveness of healing remedies, the grown old sun god, after being bitten by a serpent, suffers terribly and even risks dying.

CHAPTER 5

APOPHIS¹

A unique account of divine death, different from all the others is that of the serpent-god Apophis. He was the prime enemy of Ra and of the cosmic order, which he continually threatens every night, when the sun god travels through the Underworld. He was never openly designated as a god², nevertheless the writing of his name is sometime accompanied by the divine determinative³. He was attributed supernatural power such as a terrifying roar⁴ and a hypnotizing eye, the so called “evil eye of Apophis”⁵. He never received a cult on his own and was consequently never represented in sculpture⁶. The serpent-god Apophis makes his first appearance in the sources during the First Intermediate Period and precisely in the inscriptions of Ankhtify⁷, never being mentioned in the texts of the Old Kingdom. Consequently, the fight against him is completely lacking in the *Pyramid Texts*. The reason of this is still discussed and Apophis’s absence could be explained in two main ways. Either the idea of a daily threat to world order had not been conceived yet, developing only after the collapse of the state’s central power, or, at that time, the ancient Egyptians were too scared to intentionally mention and represent evil creatures⁸. However, it is also possible that some spells were actually composed against Apophis, even though his name is deliberately silenced. Utterance PT 298, occurring by the time of the pyramid of Unas, might suggest this possibility. As a matter of fact, Ra and the uraeus are mentioned and the latter will actually be a recurrent character in the fight against Apophis, during which it burns the snake with his devouring flame.

¹ The Egyptological literature on him is quite fragmentary. A monograph is still lacking but Kousoulis is currently completing the first one on Apophis based on his unpublished Ph.D. thesis.

² Morenz, 2004, p. 202.

³ For example CT 414, V 244a from S2C.

⁴ In pBremner-Rhind 32,17 Apophis is called “the roarer” (*hmhm.ti*). Morenz has investigated the possibility of his name actually being an onomatopoeic sound, suggesting the possible etymological meaning of “great babbler” for the name *ʒpp* (2004, p. 203-205).

⁵ On this matter see Borghouts, 1973.

⁶ Morenz, 2004, p. 202.

⁷ It consists in a passage just mentioning the “sandbank of Apophis” (Mo‘alla IV, 8-10). Although the text is fragmentary, Schenkel (1965, p. 54) reconstructed the passage as follows: “Der Himmel ist bewölkt, die Erde ist [(ausgedörnt?)], (jedermann) stirbt] von Hunger auf dieser Sandbank des Apophis”. Something worth underlining is that the determinative of the serpent’s name is not mutilated. In Ankhtify’s tomb the only mutilated sign is a crocodile with an arrow in its neck.

⁸ Bickel, 1998, p. 43.

dd mdw ḥ' r' 3ḥ.t-f tp-f

Words to say: Ra shines with the uraeus on his head

ir ḥf3.w pn pr m t3 ḥri ḏb'.w N

against this snake which came out of the earth and which is under the fingers of N.

iš' -f tp-k m ds pn im.y ḏr.t m3fd.t ḥr[.t-ib ḥw.t-'nh]

He cuts of your head with this knife, which is in the hand of Mafdet, [who is in the House of Life⁹],

st3-f tp(i).w-r3-k sšr-f mtw.t-k

he pulls your fangs and drains your poison,

m fd(.w) ipw rwḏ.w im.yw-ḥt ṯbw.t wsir

with these four cords on¹⁰ the sandals of Osiris.

ḥi.w sḏr k3 sbn¹¹

Lie down, evil snake! Slide away, bull¹²!

The action of cutting the snake's body will be a key element in the description of the violent and explicit fight against Apophis, both in the written and pictorial sources. As a matter of fact, text stress a lot the act of cutting off his head and cutting through his vertebrae with a knife in order to incapacitate and physically arm him. Besides, as a goddess protecting the sun god against Apophis, Mafdet also occurs in the literature of the New Kingdom, removing the serpent's heart or cutting off his head¹³.

However, since the beginning, Apophis is considered as the enemy of the Sun god and of the deceased. A spell from the *Coffin Texts* even portrays him as a thief, probably of Ra's eyes, whereas others allude to him being chained up. Nevertheless, the majority of Apophis's attestations dates back to the New Kingdom¹⁴.

5.1. The defeat and condemnation to death of Apophis in literature

In the case of Apophis, we are dealing with a violent dead, even though only temporary. It is not actually the sole attestation of a death by violence but it essentially is the only one in which a god is voluntarily condemned and necessarily killed by other deities, to which, in some instances, the transfigured deceased too is to be added. This, of course, is directly linked to Apophis's nature itself and, since he represents the chaotic forces trying to take over order, he urges to be defeated. The two metaphors of

⁹ The integration is after Neith's version of the spell. This passage has been omitted by the scribe in Unas's.

¹⁰ Literally "under".

¹¹ Transcription after Sethe, 1908, p. 229-230, §§ 442a – 443c.

¹² Some kind of association between snake and bull also occurs in §227a-b and §689b-d.

¹³ For instance BD 39 and BD 149 (mound 7) – a spell against Rerek – respectively. As a protective deity against snake bites, Mafdet also appears in other spells from the *Pyramid Texts*.

¹⁴ Hornung, Badawy, 1975, col. 350.

order and disorder find thus their embodiment in the figure of the sun god and Apophis respectively and, therefore, in their fight. Many sources, especially from the New Kingdom, describe this struggle, and among those are the Netherworld guides. The incidence of Apophis's attacks varies¹⁵, being much more frequent in the *Amduat*, the *Book of Gates*, the *Book of the Day* and the *Enigmatic Book* from the tomb of Ramesses IX, and quite rare in the *Book of Caves* and in the *Book of the Earth*. On the contrary, it is completely absent in the *Book of the Night*, whereas in the *Book of the Dead* the mentions of the serpent are just sporadic and two spells only are entirely focused on him (BD 7 and BD 39). The insistence on his defeat also occurs, above other sources, in the Ptolemaic Period *Book of Overthrowing Apophis*, in which his destruction is actually the core of the entire collection of spells making up the composition. Furthermore, the fight is mentioned in various solar hymns, although generally in different terms.

Even though Apophis is also believed to await the approach of Ra in Bakhu¹⁶, the Western Mountain, it is actually during the underground journey of the sun god that his menace is more serious. As a matter of fact, lying on his sandbank with that thirty-cubit-long body of his, the giant serpent waits for the arrival of the solar bark every night, ready to impede its passage by stranding it. His coils are indeed described as “sandbanks” (*ts*). Besides, in the ancient Egyptian language, the words for “neck vertebra” and “sandbank” are very similar¹⁷. Alternatively, Apophis would actually gorge the water of the underground river with the purpose of stopping the sun boat¹⁸. Despite this, thanks to the assistance of other deities who protect Ra, Apophis is always crushed and the sun bark is allowed to continue unarmed its underground journey, accompanied by the jubilation of its crew. It is indeed in the seventh hour – at about midnight – that the sun shines again, regenerated after uniting with his body in the previous hour, and, in such a sensitive time, he particularly needs to be guarded from his opponents. This is the reason why the punishment of the god's enemies, among which Apophis is of course the main one, takes place in the seventh division of the Duat¹⁹. The evil serpent is thus slayed, cut to pieces, burnt, and hence condemned to non-existence. During the fight, Ra acts passively, mainly not taking part in the

¹⁵ His presence is prominent in the *Amduat* (3rd, 10th, 12th hours with its climax in the 7th one) and in the *Book of Gates* (3rd, 6th, 11th, 12th hours).

¹⁶ CT 160 = BD 108.

¹⁷ Cf. Assmann, 1969, p. 296, note 58.

¹⁸ BD 108 explains how Apophis managed to swallow seven cubits of water, that the god Seth, using a spear of metal, forced him to spew out.

¹⁹ Hornung, 1999, p. 38. This applies to the *Amduat*, whereas other texts set the fight in different hours.

struggle, leaving the other gods to fight for his safety²⁰. A few exceptions, however, may do exist²¹. Among the various deities, the main ones are Isis, Neith, Serket, Geb, Horus and Horus's sons, plus many more which appear in the *Book of Overthrowing Apophis*. Fundamental for Ra's triumph is especially the help of Seth, since, as a version of the myth goes²², when reaching the Western Mountain, by means of his gaze, Apophis would hypnotize Ra along with his entire crew with the only exception of Seth. Otherwise, Seth and Apophis are sometimes equated, both of them being representatives of the forces of chaos.

The conception of the struggle between the sun god and his sworn enemy is not changing in its meaning and phases throughout ancient Egyptian literature. Nevertheless, comparing the various sources, changes and discrepancy in the narrative's scheme can be noted. This phenomenon is primarily to be connected with the different nature and purpose of the texts. For instance, execration rituals deal with the matter by means of a very detailed and repetitive account, and also are characterized by a large variety of terms and synonym in order to stress the expressed concepts. On the other hand, solar hymns, aimed at exalting Ra, depict the struggle more briefly but actually insist on the fact that the enemy is vanquishes.

5.1.1. *Apophis's repulsion in allusive terms*

As already pointed out, Apophis practically makes his appearance as enemy of Ra in the *Coffin Texts*, where utterances deal with his repulsion for the first time. In contrast with the later literature, such mentions of his defeat are extremely allusive. The struggle against him consists indeed of very fragmentary notices, which simply mention the fact that Apophis has been repelled and that the sun god has been saved from him.

²⁰ Nevertheless, the grammar form employed is ambiguous and the scheme verb + *n* + personal pronoun can be intended both as active *sdm-n-f* – in this case being Ra the subject of the verb – and as passive *sdm-f* with *n* expressing the dative. Thus, the meaning of a typical expression switches from “he has overthrown the enemy” (*shr-n-f hft.y*) to “the enemy is overthrown for him” (*shr n-f hft.y*), which actually is the form preferred by scholars.

²¹ See the hymn from pBerlin 3050, 3056, 3048, quoted at p. 173-174 as well as p. 187 in regard to the alternative translation given by Faulkner to passages of the *Book of overthrowing Apophis*.

²² CT 160 (II 375 b ff.) = BD 108: “[...] I know the name of this snake: ‘who is on his mountain, who is in his flame’ is his name. Now when it is the time of the evening, he will turn his eye towards Re. A standstill comes about the crew and a great bewilderment (*sgw.t*) during the course. Seth will bend himself within his reach. ‘Eh!’ he says to him by way of magic. ‘I stand within your reach! The course of the boat passes off in a regular manner! You, who see from afar, just close your eye! I have ensnared you [...]’” (Borghouts, 1973, p. 114-115).

They are spells: CT 473, CT 644, CT 681, CT 752, CT 1033²³, CT 1053²⁴, CT 1069, CT 1089, and CT 1179. The spells declaring that Ra has been rescued from him are: CT 80, CT 284²⁵, and CT 1094. The most complete account of the fight is found in CT 414, which is actually a spell explicitly conceived to drive off Apophis from the bark of Ra (*hsf* ‘*3pp m wi3 n r*’), as its title reads. The brief passage concerned reads as follows:

CT 414

<i>hft-n-i sbi</i>	I have repelled the Rebel;
<i>iw sid-n-i 3pp</i>	I have made powerless Apophis.
<i>iw nhm-n-i prr hwt m p.t hnw tph.t sbi</i> ²⁶	I have taken (him ²⁷) away. A flame ²⁸ comes out of the sky into the hole of the Rebel ²⁹ .

As anticipated and as it can be noted from the above quoted passage, the incantations of the *Coffin Texts* dealing with the struggle are extremely allusive. As a matter of fact, the verbs used to describe it (*hft*, “to repel” and *sid*, “to make powerless”) are almost “neutral”, not referring to major brutal and violent tortures as in the later literature. The same is also true with regards to other verbs occurring throughout the above listed incantations. They are: *ph*³⁰ (“to attack”), *hti*³¹ (“to repel”), *shr*³² (“to overthrow”, “to cast down”), and *dr*³³ (“to drive away”, “to repel”). Yet, *hsf* is the most recurrent³⁴ and will also be preserved in the later literature, especially in contexts which mean to give the struggle a more neutral connotation. Borghouts intends similar instances as a group of texts in which it would actually be Apophis who starts the fight and not the crew, which, in most of the cases, would simply defend the sun god³⁵.

A second difference between such instances and the later literature is the fact that in almost all of the spells from the *Coffin Texts* it is actually the deceased who

²³ Variation of B9C.

²⁴ The text is recorded on two different sarcophagi, both of them partially damaged, whose versions of the spell are actually in disaccord.

²⁵ Only in T1L.

²⁶ Transcription after De Buck, 1954, p. 246 d – 247 a.

²⁷ The object of *nhm* is not expressed.

²⁸ The reference is to the sun rays.

²⁹ A variation of this sentence also occurs at the beginning of the spell (V 244 d).

³⁰ CT 681.

³¹ CT 752.

³² CT 473, CT 1053.

³³ CT 1069. Also occurring in a variation from CT 1069 and in 1179: *dr ph.ty 3pp*.

³⁴ CT 414, CT 644, CT 689, CT 1033 (var.), CT 1053 (var.), 1089.

³⁵ Borghouts calls it “theme 1” in opposition to “theme 2” in which the crew takes the initiative to bind and then slaughter Apophis (2007, p. 26-27).

repels the evil serpent. In most of the instances he actually identifies himself with a certain deity. Primarily, he claims to be Osiris (CT 644), Shu (CT 80³⁶), and Horus (CT 282)³⁷. The use of *sdm-n-f* implies something concrete and not only possibilities: the deceased knows how to drive off Apophis, as stated in CT 1089, and concretely repels him. Nevertheless, as already explained, these spells never say that Apophis was actually killed or harmed. As a matter of fact, the term *hsf* simply means “to repel”, “to oppose” or even “to punish” but does not imply mutilation and other serious physical damages. The use of this verb – in opposition to the large variety of terms which later on will describe the numerous tortures imposed to Apophis by the gods – might consequently suggest that the deceased is not actually able to inflict major damages to Apophis³⁸. Either way, since such texts are not explicit enough, it would be premature to speculate any further at this stage of the investigation.

Yet, a passage from another spell might possibly suggest quite the opposite, namely that the repulsion of the evil serpent is actually a euphemism for the severe torture inflicted on him and of his subsequent death. As a matter of fact, in CT 689, after eating the primeval gods and absorbed their magic, the transfigured deceased is simply said to drive off (*hsf*) Apophis, though he also states that there is no god who can actually do what he has done³⁹. Now, it seems quite unlikely that an equipped and transfigured deceased who can do things that even divine beings cannot would not be able to temporarily make Apophis non-existent, as other deities are said to do in the New Kingdom literature. There are thus different possibilities: either a transfigured human being – also identifying himself with gods – can or cannot kill Apophis, or the serpent’s death as ideal annihilation was not yet conceived by the mind of the ancient Egyptians. In this regard, two spells might actually prove the contrary. In the later literature, torture by fire is a fundamental element in the serpent’s defeat and it is well-

³⁶ The concerned word following *ink* is actually partly missing, but in other passages of the spell the deceased actually identifies himself with Shu.

³⁷ Others entities are: a Great One (CT 473), “the lizard which created thunder and made Maat ascend to Ra” (CT 1069, VII, 332, f-g), “he who opened the Netherworld” (CT 1089), “the many-faced one who created thunder” (CT 1179, VII, 517, a). In CT 752 the deceased has a seat in the bark, being in charge of the riggings.

³⁸ The case of ingestion of gods by the transfigured deceased is a different case. In fact, in both PT 273-274 and CT 573, in which gods are said to be cut to pieces and cooked for the deceased’s meal, the slaughtering is performed by other deities and not by the deceased himself. The latter is indeed just consuming the primeval gods by means of absorbing their magic and bas, even though, by doing it, he is most likely killing them. Moreover, additional spells in which gods are swallowed and fed on by the deceased never say that the divinities concerned have perished. On the contrary, in the later evidence of the New Kingdom, Apophis will be said to have been made non-existent. In this instance, the serpent is actually tortured by gods and not by the transfigured deceased.

³⁹ [VI 320 u-v] *hsf-n-i ʒpp m ʒ.t-fnn ntr ir irt-n(-i)*.

known that, according to the ancient Egyptian conceptions, being burned meant ceasing to exist since the body, the fundamental support for other physical and non-physical entities, would be completely destroyed. The *Coffin Texts* do not bring it up, yet they mention the possibility of Apophis being wounded by flames. As a matter of fact, a passage from CT 284, as recorded on the sole outer-coffin of Iamu (British Museum EA6654), relates about the uraeus⁴⁰ rescuing (*nḥm*) Ra from Apophis. The text does not explain how this happens, still, in general, the uraeus-serpent is traditionally said to burn the enemies of both gods and kings. Hence, this instance might suggest the possibility that Apophis is actually tortured by means of fire, possibly implying the serpent's annihilation. All of this, however, if true, would be only indirectly suggested, in marked contrast to the later funerary and non-funerary literature, in which the use of fire will play a key role.

5.1.2. *Apophis's repulsion as an enemy already defeated*

In the New Kingdom literature, the struggle between Ra and Apophis evolved into an actual fight, characterized by a great violence, both described and implied. As a matter of fact, as Assmann points out, the struggle itself is not always the subject of certain compositions. In fact, it is the triumphal rising of the sun god, which of course implies the god's victory over his enemy, to be the core of the narration. In such instances, the fight is described in the form of its result only, namely that of a "crisis overcome"⁴¹, as Assmann defines it. The spells from the *Coffin Texts* are an example of this, but the same is particularly true in regard to solar hymns dealing with Ra sailing across the sky in the midday hours. The struggle between the sun god and his enemy is indeed also referred to in the 6th hour of *Book of the Day*, with additional allusions in the 7th, 8th and 9th hours, as well as in some of the previous ones (3rd, 4th, 5th hours). In this very composition, Apophis is actually the only hostile force mentioned, whereas in other Netherworld Books also additional rebels and enemies make their appearance. However, as anticipated, the struggle itself is not represented but is alluded to only, just stating that the serpent shall be slayed by the gods in the retinue of Ra. As for this, when compared with the *Amduat* and the *Book of Gates*, such funerary composition remains rather superficial.

⁴⁰ Its description as "the great one who is between the horns of the sunshine-god" suggests its identification with the uraeus-serpent.

⁴¹ Assmann, 1995, p. 51. In German originally termed "behobene Krisis" (Assmann, 1969, p. 201).

Book of the day, sixth hour

n 'hm n ntr pn hr ts (pn)
m hr(.t) ph.wy nt wnw.t tn
 [...] *[r] wnw.t 'rw.t n ndr.t rn-s*
wnw.t pw 6-wnw.t nt hrw
'h' r' 'h' ntr.w imi.w wi3 r hsf '3pp
wd stš 'f r '3pp
shr.t '3pp in s.t m hk3.w-s
'h' -s n stš⁴⁴

The majesty of this god travels on this sandbank
 at the end of this hour
 [...] *[to] the hour whose name is 'rwt-n-ndr.*
 It is the sixth hour of the day.
 Ra reaches its peak and the gods who are in the
 bark stand up⁴² to repel Apophis.
 Seth places⁴³ his hand against Apophis.
 The overthrowing of Apophis by Isis with her
 incantations.
 She (the hour) stands up⁴⁵ for Seth.

As we can see, the 6th hour briefly mentions the struggle. In the 7th hour we are simply informed that the majesty of Ra is passing over the sandbank and that the crew of the solar bark is jubilating after the voyage, something which actually implies that the execution of the enemy has already been performed, an event simply alluded in the 6th hour. The text referring to the 8th hour adds the reason why the crew is jubilating, namely that the Apophis has been overthrown (*shr.t*) and that Ra is justified⁴⁶. As for the 9th hour, the text declares once again that the Lord of All⁴⁷ has overthrown (*shr*) the enemy of Ra (*hft.y n r*).

Solar hymns in general are an example of this very concept, highlighting the result of the struggle rather than the action itself. Hence, staves and *sdm-n-f* forms are standard. The former is used to explain that Apophis has fallen (*hr.w*), insisting indeed on his state of being, namely on the result of the completed action of the fight. The *sdm-*

⁴² Piankoff interprets the circular sign following the first 'h' as *sp* and consequently translates with two imperative forms: "levez-vous, levez-vous, que les dieux qui sont dans la bark se lèvent pour repousser Apophis". Besides, he considers the passage as direct discourse by Isis (cf. 1942, p. 16). Generally speaking, according to Assmann (1995, p. 35), imperative forms actually have a magical character and, along with *sdm-f* forms, they would represent the enemy's theme.

⁴³ Surely, *sdm-f* forms can be translated with a future tense, intending them as threats uttered against Apophis. Personally, I prefer to translate them – context permitting – with a present tense, intending the various statements as snapshots of the struggle, exactly like vignettes and wall paintings. On the contrary, nominal forms are atemporal.

⁴⁴ Transcription based on the synoptic edition by Müller-Roth, 2008, p. 200-202.

⁴⁵ The Hour Ritual associates every hour with a specific deity and the connection is expressed with the formula "she (i.e. the day hour) stands up for god N ('h'-s n N)". The *Book of the Night* uses a different formula: "the god who is in this hour as the leader of this god". The formula 'h' n is also found in further sources – pJumilhac, pSalt 825, and an unpublished papyrus in the Brooklyn Museum – to assign animals and plants to gods.

⁴⁶ *m h' .t ntr.w im-s hft shr.t '3pp sm3' hrw wd ntr pni*. "The gods in it are in jubilation when Apophis is overthrown and the majesty of this god is justified" (Piankoff, 1942, p. 17).

⁴⁷ Interpreting *nb* in connection with *tm* instead of with 'nh, we obtain the reading "the Lord of All lives" (cf. Assmann, 1969, p. 297). Piankoff, on the contrary, associates the term 'nh with the previous sentence and hence obtains the name of the god Atum (cf. 1942, p. 19).

n-f forms have essentially the same meaning since expressing concluded actions. Generally speaking, in solar hymns – and not only in regard to Apophis – verbal forms are fundamental to describe events and actions. They stand indeed in opposition to nominal forms which, on the contrary, are more fitted to define atemporal characteristics and which consequently are employed in eulogies⁴⁸.

Apophis is thus not being felled at the moment but has already been vanquished. As a matter of fact, solar hymns commonly refer to the struggle as follows⁴⁹:

Hymn to Ra from the stelophor of Nakht

<i>nmi-k hr.t ib-k 3w</i>	You traverse the sky with joyful heart.
<i>mr nh3.wy hpr(w) m htp.w</i>	The Two Knives Lake ⁵⁰ is at peace.
<i>sbi hr(.w)</i>	The rebel has fallen;
<i>‘.wy-fy k3s.w</i>	his arms are bound;
<i>hsk-n dm.t t(3)s.w(t)-f</i>	the knife has cut into his vertebrae.
<i>wnn r ‘ m m3 ‘.w nfr</i>	Ra continues in favorable wing;
<i>msk.tt sk-n-s ph sw</i>	the bark ⁵¹ has destroyed he who attacked it.
<i>st3w-tw rs.w mh.tiw</i>	The southerners and the northerners drag you;
<i>in.ti izb.tt hr dw3-k⁵²</i>	westerners and easterners praise you ⁵³ .

The mention of the fact that the enemy has fallen, that his arms are bound, and that his capacity of movement has been taken inhibited are typical elements of solar hymns, as well as the reference to the fact that the knife has cut into the snake’s vertebrae. Examples are really numerous, showing that such elements were the traditional features of the fight against Apophis as conceived by the Ancient Egyptian.

⁴⁸ Assmann, 1995, p. 42.

⁴⁹ Some parallel of this hymns are provided in Stewart, 1960, p. 85-87, whereas a list of complete and abridged versions – comprising stelae, stelophors, statues, pyramidions, papyri, and tombs inscription – along with a German translation and commentary, is given in Assmann, 1969, p. 263-280. The various versions date back from the early XVIII Dynasty to the Ramesside Period. Similar examples can be found in translation in Zandee, 1959-62. The same content is found in BD 15 A III. The version of the text quoted is that recorded on the stelophor of Nakht (B in Stewart, 1960) with the last lines added from the papyrus of Ani (F in Stewart, 1960).

⁵⁰ For the reading of this term see the study by Altenmüller, 1966.

⁵¹ In this instance, the *msk.tt*-bark should be intended as the sun boat *per se*. As a matter of fact, as Assmann points out (1969, p. 273-274), hymns rarely distinguish between the *m‘nd.t-* and *msk.tt* bark – canonically denoting the boat in which the sun god sails during the day and night, respectively. Consequently, when only one of the two is mentioned, the *msk.tt*-bark occurs more often and thus is used to indicate Ra’s boat in general terms. However, in the case of the above quoted hymn, the ship is actually a metonym for the crew.

⁵² Transcription based on Stewart, 1960, p. 86.

⁵³ On the relation between the four cardinal points and boats see Thomas, 1956, p. 69-70.

Sometimes the use of fire too is reported. All of this transforms the fight in a real and violent torture, as will be shown in the paragraph below.

As a further example to better appreciate the use of statives and *sdm-n-f* forms some passages of the great hymn to Ra-Harakhty will also be quoted. This hymn to the rising sun is recorded on three more or less fragmentary papyri preserved in the Berlin museum – namely numbers 3050, 3056 and 3048 – probably dating back to the reign of Takelot (XXII Dynasty). Next to the ritual version, adaptation for tombs and funerary papyri also exist⁵⁴.

pBerlin 3050, 3056, 3048

[I,4] *pr-k t̄z-k m nfr-k*

You come out (from the horizon), you rise (in the sky), you are high in your beauty.

n'y [I,5] wī3-k skdd-k im-f m̄3'

Your boat sails, and you travel in it, justified, through your mother Nut every day.

hrw m mw.t-k nw.t hrw nb

You traverse the sky; your enemy⁵⁵ has fallen.

[1,6] *nmi-k hr p.t sbi-k hr(.w)*

{...}

{...}

[II,6] *mw.t-k nw.t ib-s ndm*

The heart of your mother Nut is joyful, since Ra overthrows his enemies.

sh̄r r' hfti.w [II,7]-f

The sky rejoices. How happy is the earth!

p.t nhm t̄3 m r̄s.wy

Gods and goddesses are cheerful and are giving praises to Ra in the Two Lands,

ntr.w ntr.wt m hb hr [II,8] r rdi.t

when they see him rising in his boat, after he has overthrown the rebel in his moment.

ī3.w n r' m t̄3.wy

The cabin is intact; the uraeus is at her place.

m̄33-sn sw h' m [III,1] wī3-f

The uraeus, she has driven away the enemy.

sh̄r-n-f sbi m 3.t-f

{...}

k̄3p wd̄3 n mhn.yt hr s.t-st

You have mutilated the physical strength of the enemies.

i' r.t dr-n-s sbi

The enemy of Ra has fallen in the flames.

{...}

{...}

sī3t-n-k ph̄.ty n sbi.tiw

hft [III,8] n r' hr(.w) m h̄.t

Ra shall be strong, the rebel shall be weak;

{...}

Ra shall be high, the rebel shall be low;

nh̄r r' w̄3s [IV,4] sbi

Ra shall be alive, the rebel shall be dead⁵⁶;

k̄3 r' dh̄3 sbi

'nh̄ r' mt sbi

⁵⁴ A list of occurrences, as well as a German translation and detailed commentary, is given in Assmann, 1969, p. 187-227.

⁵⁵ Sauneron's hieroglyphic transcription actually records *sbi* with plural strokes and a 3 following *i*. The text also reports the form *sbi.tiw*. Associating the latter with its synonym *hfti.w*, we can assume that the form *sbi.tiw* is the one intended with plural meaning, in contrast to *sbi*. As a consequence *sbi* might possibly be intended as the singular form of the term, even though followed by plural strokes.

⁵⁶ This passage in the form of a litany compares the positive qualities of the sun god with the negative features of his enemy. Its aim is that of praising Ra and, at the same time, felling Apophis by means of the magical repetition of the formula. However, the assertion that the god lives whereas his enemy dies can be found in many other hymns. For examples and references on this issue see Assmann, 1969, p. 168-169, 176, 200-201: "Ra lives, the evil-doer is dead. You have endured, your opponent has fallen" (*'nh̄ r' mwt n̄ik iw-k mn.ti hfti.k hr.w*; Assmann, 1969, p. 176). These verses in particular are very similar to magical

'3 r ' kt(t) sbi
 s3 r ' hkr [IV,6] sbi
 thw r ' ib sbi
 wbn r ' hrp [IV,7] sbi
 nfr r ' bin sbi
 wsr r ' nmh sbi
 wnn r ' fdk.ti '3pp⁵⁷

Ra shall be great, the rebel shall be small;
 Ra shall be sated, the rebel shall be hungry;
 Ra shall be drunk, the rebel shall be thirsty;
 Ra shall be rise, the rebel shall sink;
 Ra shall be beautiful, the rebel shall be evil;
 Ra shall be powerful, the rebel shall be miserable;
 Ra shall be exist, the rebel shall be hacked into pieces;

As it can easily be noted, the struggle between the two deities is not described and the action is already concluded, resulting in the triumph of Ra and in the defeat of his enemy. As explained above, stative and *sdm-n-f* forms are generally employed in this kind of text. Nevertheless, a few exceptions may occur⁵⁸ as in this composition in which *sdm-f* forms indeed occur in the brief litany within the hymn. In this very instance, the meaning is actually different and *sdm-f* forms essentially express wishes rather than proper actions. This different shade of meaning is to be connected with magical intent of the hymn, better understandable in the context of magical texts⁵⁹.

The litanies in chapter 15 B III from the *Book of the Dead* recall, in a way, the last part of the invocation found at the end of the above cited hymns. The sun god is greeted, exalted in his might, and is said to have the rebel cut up as well as Apophis annihilated for him⁶⁰. As this demonstrates, the struggle is not actually being performed at the moment and the sun god has not taken part in it, either.

The simple allusion of the fight between Apophis and the gods in the solar bark is common in most of the sources. A further example is found in the 9th hour of the Hour Ritual, in which we read that the enemies of Ra⁶¹ – among whom we can assume Apophis is certainly the actual one intended – have been driven back (*hml*) and are now

healing formulae uttered against snake and scorpion venom, which indeed read: “Ra lives! The poison dies!”

⁵⁷ Transcription based on Sauneron, 1953, p. 84-88.

⁵⁸ In this composition: *shw r ' hf.tiw-f* (II,7).

⁵⁹ Assmann, 1969, p. 196 and 201.

⁶⁰ *bhn n-k sbi* and *shwm n-k '3pp*, respectively. The *n* is generally considered to be a dative, and the verbs are consequently understood as two passive forms. Consequently, the sun god's role would be essentially passive, being Ra the judge but not the executor. This interpretation is supported by the representation of the struggle against the enemies of the sun god as described in the *Book of Amduat* (II, 15), in which they are opposed to the righteous, who have behaved properly on earth and are now fighting for their god. For this interpretation see Assmann, 1969, p. 89.

⁶¹ Assmann (1969, p. 125) indeed translates the term with the singular form: “dein Feind, der vor dir zurückgewichen ist, liegt gefällt”.

lying overthrown⁶². After a brief lacuna⁶³, the text stresses again the fact that the enemies have been punished/cut up (*bhn*).

A fact which is indeed particularly stressed is that the enemy is said to be fallen (*hr*), a statement which commonly precedes the assertion that the enemy's arms are bound, his vertebrae cut, and so on. However, the mention that the enemy has fallen is almost omnipresent⁶⁴. In more articulated instances we can even find the assertion that he has fallen to the god's knife⁶⁵. Sometimes texts also add that Apophis has fallen in his place of execution (*hrw m nm.t-f*⁶⁶) and in BD 14 A IV the deceased is said to recite the 77 rolls in his place of slaughter (*nm.t*) every day⁶⁷.

5.1.3. Apophis's repulsion described as a violent torture

Contrary to texts dealing with the struggle as a menace already overcome, other compositions focus on the fight itself. Next to more "neutral" terms, such as *hsf* and *shr*, the New Kingdom indeed witnesses the development of the fight between Ra and Apophis in explicit terms. As a matter of fact, not only is the fight described but it is also enriched with many details. This results in long and comprehensive lists of the various tortures inflicted on the evil representative of the forces of chaos. Tortures are intended to make Apophis powerless in order to harm, overcome and destroy him. Nonetheless, despite the brutality of some of those persecutions, texts do not necessarily

⁶² *hft.yw-k hw n-k hr shr*.

⁶³ The lacuna obliterates the name of Queen Hatshepsut as well as some of the following signs. The concerned text is inscribed on the south wall of the southern hall of offerings in the temple of Deir el-Bahari. The first seven hours and the first part of the 8th one are completely missing (cf. Naville, 1901, p. 10, pl. CXIV). A brief passage from the hymn of the 9th hour is also preserved on the fragment from the tomb of Bakenrenef now in the museum of Lyon (No. 91; Déveria, 1896, pl. VI).

⁶⁴ Examples are found in the Hour Ritual (4th and 5th hours), hymns to the sun from the *Book of the Dead*, in a praise to the sun god (ostracon Cairo 25206, edited by Erman, 1900, p. 20-23) which is part of the so called "Gebeten eines ungerecht Verfolgten" (XX Dynasty). For more examples and references see Assmann, 1969, p. 156, 169, 176, 188, 199.

⁶⁵ Stele Berlin 7306 (edition by Roeder, 1924, p. 131-133; translation available in Assmann, 1975, p. 170-171): *nik hr n dm.t-k*. "The evil doer has fallen to your knife". The sentence immediately following states that his *rkr* is cut from him (*ds rkr-f im-f*). The meaning of *rkr* is unknown, but we can assume that it has to be somehow connected with Apophis's strength, since hymns often read that his strength has been taken away from him. The use of *š'.t* instead of *dm.t* is also attested, for instance, in TT 106 (Cf. Assmann, 1969, p. 255).

⁶⁶ Stelophorus Statue of Khaemhat (XVIII Dynasty) in the Brooklyn Museum (37.48E). A translation is given in Assmann, 1975, p. 161-162, no. 55A, and Zandee, 1959-1962, p. 57-58; transcription and translation also in Assmann, 1983, p. 114-115. Similarly to this example are also other hymns in Assmann, 1975, p. 176, no. 64; p. 179, no. 67.

⁶⁷ Cf. Allen, 1949, p. 351-352. No other reference to the 77 scrolls is known. A solar hymn inscribed in TT23 actually mentions a book (*md3.t*) which the deceased wishes to possess in order to drive away the enemies of the sun god. Nevertheless, the 77 scrolls must be in connection with the ritual of fighting the sun god's enemy, working just like the *Book of Overthrowing Apophis* (pBremner-Rhind).

mention the fact that Apophis is actually annihilated and silence the obvious conclusion of the fight, just like the earlier sources did. On the contrary, other compositions actually stress this last aspect with the purpose of condemning Apophis to suffer “second death”. But let us proceed with order, and firstly focus on sources not mentioning the god’s total destruction.

Chapter BD 39, “spell for repelling Rerek⁶⁸ in the necropolis”, is almost completely dedicated to the triumph of the Ra over Apophis. In this respect, it is certainly the most representative text from the *Book of the Dead* and stands halfway between the tradition of the Middle and New Kingdoms but still has no antecedent among the incantations from the *Coffin Texts*⁶⁹.

BD 39

<i>r3 n ḥsf rrk m ḥr.t-nṯr</i>	Spell to repel Rerek in the necropolis.
<i>ḏd mdw in N m3' ḥrw</i>	Words said by Osiris N, justified:
<i>ḥ3-k bn int m '3 pfy</i>	Go! You shall swim in the lake of the primeval water,
<i>is mḥ-k r š nw.w</i>	to the place where you father commanded that I
	slaughter you.
<i>r bw wḏt-n it ir-i š '.t-k</i>	Stay away from this birth-place of Ra, in which is his
	trembling.
<i>ḥr mshn.t twy nt r' imt ndw-f</i>	Back, rebel of his light!
<i>ḥ3-k sbi šsp-f</i>	Your words are overthrown.
<i>ḥr mdw-k pn' ḥr-k in nṯr.w</i>	Your face is turned backwards by the gods.
<i>šd ḥ3.ty-k in m3fd.t</i>	Your heart is taken away by Mafdet,
<i>wḏt ksw-k in ḥdd.t</i>	Your fetters are put by Hededet ⁷⁰ ,
<i>wḏ-t(w) nkn-k in m3' .t</i>	Your cut is made by Maat,
<i>shṯr gs wt.w</i>	overthrown at the side of the embalmers.
<i>ḥr sbn '3pp ḥfty n r'</i>	Fall! Slide away! Apophis, enemy of Ra.
<i>{...}</i>	<i>{...}</i>
<i>iw '3pp ḥr(w) n snḥ</i>	Apophis has fallen in the fastenings.
<i>kn-n sw nṯr.w rsy.w mḥ.tyw</i>	The gods of the south, north, west and east have bound
<i>imn.tyw i3b.tyw</i>	him,
<i>'k3.w-sn im-f</i>	their fastenings on him.
<i>ḥtp r' sp 2 swḏ3 r' m ḥtp</i>	Ra is content (twice), Ra is made whole in peace.
<i>'3pp ḥr(w)</i>	Apophis is overthrown.
<i>ḥ3 '3pp ḥfty n r'</i>	Go down, Apophis, enemy of Ra!
<i>wr dp-k dpt twy ḥr ib n ḥdd.t</i>	Your taste is greater than this taste on the heart of
	Hededet/the scorpion.
<i>wr ir-n-k st mry</i>	It is great, you have done it and are in are in pain.
<i>nn ḥr-s ḏ.t</i>	She shall not fall forever.

⁶⁸ An alternative name of Apophis.

⁶⁹ Borghouts, 2007, p. 9.

⁷⁰ The task of binding the serpent is generally Serket’s to perform.

<i>nn bk-n nn q3-k</i>	You shall not beget, you shall not copulate.
<i>hft r' hsf hr-k msdd r'</i>	Enemy of Ra, your face is repelled, whom Ra hates.
<i>m3-n-k h'-k</i>	You have seen your flesh,
<i>kn.w tp-k sdw hr</i>	you head is beaten, your face is broken,
<i>snw tp gs wt.w</i>	You, who pass by at the side of the embalmers,
<i>dndn tp-k imy t3-f</i>	Your head which is in its earth is furious.
<i>sd ks.w-k bhn' wt-k</i>	Your bones are broken, your limbs are cut off.
<i>sip-n tw n 3kr</i> ⁷¹	You have been delivered to Aker.

Reading through the composition, we can note the use of statives referring to the defeat of Apophis and the use of passive forms when deities perform actions on him. Tortures such as binding, the turning around of his head, and the removal of his heart are mentioned. To underline the fact that Apophis is imposed various tortures passive forms are employed instead of active ones. Hence, it is not properly about deities performing some kind of brutal torture on him, but the emphasis is rather Apophis suffering them. This is in direct opposition to execration rituals, in which the performative action is a fundamental element for the achievement of the magical goal, which consequently employ active forms to specify that a named deity actually harms Apophis. In particular, the above quoted BD 39 describes how Apophis is rendered harmless: his face is turned backwards by the gods, his heart is taken away by Mafdet, his body bound by Hedetet, his bones crushed, and his limbs cut off. In the ritual context, all of these practices do not seem to have been performed in a particular order, even though binding Apophis and deprive him of his strength and magic were certainly conceived as the first steps of his torture.

Surely, the most famous account of the battle against Apophis is that reported in the book of *Amduat*, in which it occurs twice, namely in the seventh and twelfth divisions. In the course of the seventh hour, the solar bark advances by means of the incantations of Isis, who is standing on the bow of the boat with both arms stretched out before her, and of the Eldest Magician⁷². It is written that, thanks to their words of

⁷¹ Transcription based on the papyrus of the chamberlain Neferwebenef Turi (mid-XVIII Dynasty). Edition by Ratié, 1968, pl. XII.

⁷² The name of the god *hk3* can both be left untranslated or translated as the god “Magic”, better rendered in “Magician”. The epithet “eldest”, attributed to the concerned god also in sources others than the *Amduat*, is in close connection with the myth of creation. In CT 261 the deceased, identifying himself with this god, affirms to be the son of the creator, the first god that he ever made, having been generated previously to the Ennead, which he, namely the Magician, caused to live. Hence, Heka can also be intended as a personification of magic. A brief study has been dedicated to the god Heka by te Velde (1967-1970). Hornung (1963b, p. 131), on the contrary, postulates that in the *Amduat* the Eldest Magician would actually be Seth, who is not called by name because of his evil nature. As a proof he discusses the

magic, Apophis is turned back and sealed in Amenti, the hidden place of the Duat. His tortures are then briefly described (§§ 518-521), just explaining, in a very superficial way, how he is repelled (*hsf*) by the magic of Isis and of the Eldest Magician, and punished (*nik*) by other goddesses. To incapacitate Apophis it is necessary to deprive him of his hypnotizing glaze and this is achieved by the Flesh of Ra who hides it. “He who is over his knives” throws the lasso around his head, whereas the Eldest Magician and Isis take away his strength. The typical phases of the struggle are found here once again, confirming that the ideas revolving around Apophis’s death standardized in such images, event and terminology. However, in the *Amduat* the narrative technique employed is completely changed, differing in the use of active *sdm-f* forms. Such grammar form is contrary to the custom of the solar hymns, but can easily be explained if we consider that the subject of such funerary text is actually the journey of the night bark and that it does not consist in a simple praise addressed to the rising sun. Since the struggle against Apophis is a crucial event in the crossing of the Underworld, it would be logical to assume that this event is actually referred to as something happening at the moment, rather than as an already concluded episode or overcome crisis.

Amduat, seventh hour

<i>wnn-f m shꜣ pn r ts-f im dwꜣ.t</i>	He is overthrown on his sandbank in the Duat.
<i>sdꜣw-mw rn n ts pn 440 m ꜣw-f 44 m wsh-f</i>	“water-bringer” ⁷³ is the name of this sandbank, 440 cubits in its length and 44 in its width.
<i>in mdw-f sꜣm ntꜣ.w r-f</i>	His voice is what guides the gods to him.
<i>iw-f n im-f m-ḥ.t ꜣ nꜣr pn ꜣ nꜣw.t pn</i>	He is in there after this great god has entered this city.
<i>‘m ḥꜣ ḥ.‘w ir-f m tꜣ r ‘pp-f ḥꜣr-f</i>	Then, the Flesh (of Ra) hides ⁷⁴ his eye in the earth so that he (i.e. Ra) can pass over him (i.e. Apophis).
<i>wd ḥꜣ srꜣt-ḥtt (sph.w) m tp ḥꜣry-ds.w-f dꜣ-f</i>	“She who causes the throat to breathe” ⁷⁵ puts the lasso around the head and “he who is over his knives” throws the lasso, “the punisher” around his feet,
<i>m-ḥt nḥm s.t ḥꜣꜣ-sms.w ph.ty-f m ḥꜣꜣ.w-sn</i>	after Isis and the Eldest Magician have

stela of the sphinx of Tuthmosis IV, which, among other deities, indeed mentions “Seth, the Eldest Magician”; cf. Helck, 1956, p. 1542, l. 3. On *ḥꜣꜣ sms.w* cf. also LGG V, p. 555.

⁷³ The name of the sandbank might refer to the fact that Apophis shall spit again the disgorged water; cf. Hornung, 1963b, p. 133.

⁷⁴ Literally “swallows”.

⁷⁵ An epithet of Serket.

*iw rh st tp-t3 m nty swri nh3-hr mw-f*⁷⁶

taken away his physical strength with their magic.

He who knows this on the earth is one whose water the grim of face cannot drink.

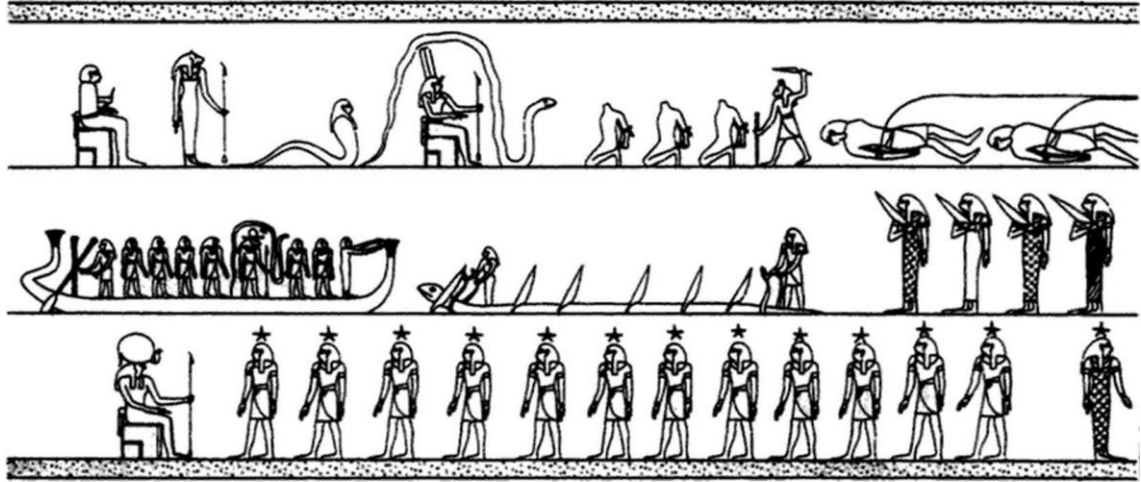


Figure 7. Vignette from the seventh hour of the Amduat. In the middle register Apophis, in front of the solar bark, is depicted tied and with knives cutting through his body. Source: Hornung, 1999, p. 48, fig. 20.

Generally speaking, we can note that, despite the composition lists the various tortures imposed by divine persecutors and suffered by Apophis, it is never said that the evil serpent has fallen (*hr.w*) and has subsequently been successfully overthrown. We simply read that Ra passes (*p*) over him, just implying the sun god's victory. But, before emerging rejuvenated and triumphant from the Duat, the sun god is attacked once more by his enemy, who is repulsed by fire-spitting snakes and by the oarsmen who accompany Ra in his boat. Nevertheless, in a passage from the upper register of the twelfth hour which is referring to twelve goddesses, each of which has a snake around her neck, a *sdm-n-f* form expresses the concluded defeat of Apophis. The sun god is now ready to emerge from the eastern horizon, whereas the struggle has occurred hours before.

⁷⁶ Transcription based on Hornung, 1963a, p. 124-125, §§ 515-517.

Amduat, twelfth hour

<i>ir.t-sn m t3</i>	What they have to do ⁷⁷ on the earth:
<i>rdi.t sfh n ntiw m kk.w m tk3.w n</i>	to give refreshment to those who are in the darkness
<i>i' r.t-sn</i>	by means of the flames of their uraeus,
<i>m-hyt iw-sn sb-sn r'</i>	after they have returned and conducted Ra.
<i>nik-n-sn n-f '3pp m p.t</i> ⁷⁸	They have punished for him Apophis in the sky.

Another important means used to defeat the evil serpent is magic. It is particularly highlighted in the abridged version of the *Amduat*, which consists in some kind of summary added to the long version of the book, and which stresses particular contents⁷⁹. Whereas the seventh hour of the *Book of Amduat* describes the physical incapacitation of the evil serpent by means of lassoing, torture and magic, in the short version only the last one is reported. The idea of magic is notably stressed, and in particular the magical power (*hk3.wy*) of Isis and of the Elder Magician. Such element is recalled three times despite the limited possibilities offered by the briefness of the chapter concerning the seventh hour. This suggests that magic was possibly fundamental to successfully fight Apophis. Anyway, the text is somehow even more gentle and allusive, just mentioning but not describing the cutting (*š'.t*) of Ra's enemy.

The mention of Apophis's slaughter in solar hymns is very rare, since such literary genre insists more on the result of the struggle rather than on the means by which the victory of the sun god is achieved. One of the more representative examples of the presence of the violent aspect in solar hymns is the hymn to Thoth recorded on the life-size granite statue of general Horemheb as a scribe (MMA 23.10.1)⁸⁰. The base of the statue reads an offering formula, whereas the pray to Thot is inscribed on the unrolled scroll of papyrus in Horemheb's lap. The passage under analysis occupies columns 12-15:

Hymn to Thoth

<i>wp [13]-k w3.t r s.t nt wi3</i>	You open the way to the place of the bark.
<i>ir-k [14] hw.t r sbi pw</i>	You act against that enemy;

⁷⁷ Literally "their making".

⁷⁸ Transcription based on Hornung, 1963a, p. 194.

⁷⁹ Hornung, 1999, p. 33.

⁸⁰ Transcription, translation, commentary, and photographs are found in Winlock's publication (1924).

<i>wḏ'-k tp-f</i>	you cut ⁸¹ his head;
<i>sd-k b3-f</i>	you break his ba;
<i>īṭ-k [15] ḥ3.t(?) -f r ḥ.t</i>	you take his body(?) to the flame.
<i>ntk nṯr īr š'.t</i> ⁸²	You are the god who performs his slaughtering.

A second example is perhaps the hymn to the sun god inscribed on ostracon Cairo CG 25206. It is signaled by Borghouts, who indeed reads the term *š'.t* in line 7⁸³. Nevertheless, in Erman's hieroglyphic transcription of the ostracon, the corresponding space is left blank due to ambiguities in sign decipherment⁸⁴.

5.1.4. Apophis's defeat as total annihilation

Next to compositions insisting on the result of the struggle – the “crisis overcome”, as Assmann defined it – which underline the fact that the tortures imposed on Apophis are a punishment, others add a new element to the account. It actually consists in the result of the tortures – only gently alluded to or completely silenced in the two above mentioned kinds of text – namely total annihilation (“second death”). We have already mentioned the fact that fire implies the destruction of the body, a physical support necessary to guarantee the survival in the afterlife. The lacking of the corpse – or of a proper substitute – implies the impossibility to continue to exist, hence meaning complete obliteration. The use of fire against Apophis is indeed aimed at this and is actually a fundamental element in his oppression. As component of the torture, fire is found already in some spells from the *Coffin Texts* (CT 414⁸⁵ and CT 284). Nevertheless, its implications are made explicit only from the New Kingdom on, along with the serpent's destruction in general.

In the third division of the *Book of Gates* we read indeed that the gods accompanying Ra in his nocturnal journey condemn (*sip*) Apophis to destruction (*ḥtm*). In this case, fire is actually in close connection with annihilation, being a blast of fire mentioned just before the serpent's sentence to death. However, fire seems not to be fundamental to make Apophis non-existent. As a matter of fact, in other instances annihilation is mentioned outside of the context of destruction by fire. The severing of

⁸¹ The verb *wḏ'* (“to separate”, “to cut”) would also evoke the idea of judgement, indeed being one of its meaning “to judge”. On this cf. Corteggiani, 1995, p. 149.

⁸² Transcription after Winlock, 1924, pl. IV.

⁸³ Cf. Borghouts, 2007, p. 28.

⁸⁴ Erman, 1900, p. 20. Cf. Daressy, 1901, pl. XXXV.

⁸⁵ In this instance, sunrays are properly intended.

Apophis's body might possibly be sufficient to meet the purpose, since the corpse would not be intact anyway. Yet, fire plays a leading role in magical practices illustrated in execration rituals. The explicit mention of the evil serpent's condemnation to non-existence seems to appear somewhat lately, being it completely lacking in the *Coffin Texts* as well as in the *Amduat*, in which the struggle against Apophis is an event of utmost importance for the entire narration. On the contrary, this concept is found in the *Book of Gates*, which appears to originate in the Amarna Period⁸⁶. During such phase of Ancient Egypt history, however, for obvious reasons, evidence of the struggle against Apophis is completely lacking.

In two passages from the *Book of Gates*, occurring in the lower register of the third division (scene 13) and in the upper one of the sixth division (scene 35), respectively, we read:

Book of Gates, third division

{...} <i>in-sn psd.t r' sn hsf-sn '3pp hr r'</i>	{...} (said) by the company ⁸⁷ of Ra, (when) they repel Apophis before Ra:
<i>sn-t(w) tp-k '3pp sn-t(w) k3b</i>	Your head has been cut, Apophis, your coils have been cut,
<i>nn ntknw-k m dp.t r' nn h3 k r dp.t ntr</i>	so that you shall not draw near the bark of Ra and board the divine bark.
<i>pr hh r-k n št3.t</i>	A blast of fire comes out to you from the secret room.
<i>iw-n sip-n tw htm-k {...}</i> ⁸⁸	We condemn ⁸⁹ you to your destruction.

Book of Gates, seventh division

<i>in n-sn n r'</i>	Said by Ra to them:
<i>hm-n-tn sbi ht-n-tn '3pp</i>	You have driven back the rebel ⁹⁰ . You have repelled Apophis.
<i>pr tp.w imi.w-f sk-f</i>	When the heads, which are in him, come out ⁹¹ , let him perish.
<i>i-n-sn htm-f</i> ⁹²	After they have said (it), he is destroyed.

⁸⁶ The one inscribed in the sarcophagus chamber of Horemheb, even though incomplete, is indeed the first known occurrence.

⁸⁷ The gods helping Ra against Apophis are actually intended rather than the Heliopolitan Ennead.

⁸⁸ Transcription based on Hornung, 1979, p. 76-77.

⁸⁹ Literally "assign".

⁹⁰ Zandee (1969, p. 300) translates this line, as well as the following one, with imperative forms.

⁹¹ The heads coming out of his body during the slaughtering symbolize the souls that Apophis has swallowed and that are now let free. A wall painting in the tomb of Ramesses VI portrays this scene, representing Apophis with twelve heads above his back. On this see p. 197-198 as well as figure 10.

The passage from the third division of the *Book of Gates* deals with Apophis's destruction just in the form of a wish or possibility, employing *sdm-f* forms. In opposition to this, the passage from the seventh division which reads a speech by Ra uses *sdm-n-f* forms.

Outside of the funerary literature, similar instances are also found in solar hymns. Interesting examples are BD 15A5⁹³, BD 15A4 – which is very rude but actually silences Apophis's identity – BD 15g, and the hymn addressed to Amun-Ra recorded on pBoulaq 17 (Cairo CG 58038)⁹⁴.

pBoulaq 17

<i>skd.t m ḥ 'wt m33-sn ḥr.w sbi</i>	The crew rejoices ⁹⁵ when they see that the rebel has fallen.
<i>shp ḥ 'wt-f m ds 'm-n sw ḥ.t</i>	His flesh is cut ⁹⁶ with the knife and fire has devoured him.
<i>sswn.w b3-f r ḥ3.t-f</i>	His ba is destroyed more than his body.
<i>nik pf nḥm nmt.t-f</i> ⁹⁷	This evil-doer-serpent, his movement is inhibited ⁹⁸ .

The verb *sswn* (“to punish”) originally meant “to destroy” and implies body injury or possibly even total destruction⁹⁹. Thus, is quite significant, considering the meaning of the death of Apophis, who indeed is labelled as enemy of Ra. Passages from the other two hymns are quoted below:

⁹² Transcription based on Hornung, 1979, p. 211-212.

⁹³ Number 15A5, together with other chapters, has been identified by Allen as the result of a search for *Book of the Dead* documents in the Oriental Institute Museum of Chicago. To name the hymns, Allen employed the classification established by Naville, who differentiated the solar hymns in two groups: group A comprising hymns to the rising, and group B designating those dedicated to the setting sun. Chapter 15A5 does not occur on funerary papyri but is found on fourteen stelae only, in six of which it occurs paired with 15B4. All occurrences date back from the Late Period to the Ptolemaic Period. The complete list of sources, as well as a brief bibliography, is available in Allen, 1949. However, the label of these texts can be misleading, since BD A4 and BD B5, hymns to the rising and setting sun respectively, actually have nothing to do with the *Book of the Dead*.

⁹⁴ The papyrus dates back to the XVIII Dynasty. Nevertheless, Hassan (1928, p. 157-93) pointed out that this hymn is partially inscribed on a statue dated to the XIII and XVII Dynasties in the British Museum (EA 40959).

⁹⁵ Literally “is in joy”.

⁹⁶ Literally “swallowed”.

⁹⁷ Transliteration based on Grèbaut's edition (1847, p. 25-26).

⁹⁸ Literally “taken away”.

⁹⁹ Zandee, 1960, p. 284.

BD 15A5

iw šd-n-i md3.t 77 hr nm.t '3pp
hft b3-f m h.t h3.t-f n 3h.t hk3.w-f n
ir.t hr
tm tw nn sh3-tw-f
iw ir-t(w) hrt '3pp m š'.t n hrw nb¹⁰¹

I have read the 77 books¹⁰⁰ at the place of slaughter of Apophis.
 His soul is set on the fire, his body on the flame, his magic to the fiery eye of Horus so that he may not exist and it is not remembered of him.
 The share of Apophis is made in the slaughter of every day.

BD 15A4

3h wr.t im.t tp-k
sw-n-n-s nk dw kd
sft-h-n-s ts.t-f
wš'-n sw nsr.t wnm-n s(w) wnmyt
hsf-n sw s.t bh-n-n sw nb.t-hw.t
sip-n sw dhw.ty n ds
ir-n-f sw m tm-wnn¹⁰²

The great transfigured goddess is on your head.
 She has cut out the criminal of evil character and has undone his spine.
 The flame has chewed him, the devouring one (i.e. the flame) has devoured him.
 Isis has repelled him, Nephthys has cut him up.
 Thot has assigned him to the knife and has made him to be non-existent.

BD 15 g

ind hr-k bh-nw n-k sb
sh-tm n-k '(3)pp¹⁰³

Hail to you! For you the rebels have been slain, for you Apophis has been annihilated.

More loquacious is a magical formula inscribed on the healing pink quartzite statue of Ramesses III (Cairo GC 69771) meant to drive off snakes and offer protection against their bites and venom. Nonetheless, the formula is explicitly addressed against Apophis, the determinative of whose name also appears mutilated. The concerned incantation, recalling pBremner-Rhind in various passages, has been numbered 8 by Drioton in his edition of the group and is engraved on the rear face of the statue. The

¹⁰⁰ This reference is not mentioned anywhere else. The only possible similarity is in the Litany of the Sun, as von Bergmann noted, which comprises seventy-five stanzas (von Bergman, 1879, p. 15).

¹⁰¹ Transcription based on the wooden stela of 'nh-f-n-hnsw from the Sabatier Collection. Hieroglyphic transcription in Legrain, 1893, p. 58-59.

¹⁰² Version based on the papyrus of Nakhtamun (XIX Dynasty); Quirke, 2013, p. 39.

¹⁰³ Composition BD 15 g is found for the first time, along with a cycle of other eight hymns, on the papyrus of Nestanebetisheru (British Museum EA 10554), daughter of the high priest of Amun Paynedjem (XXI Dynasty). The first six hymns were already known from the XIX Dynasty papyrus of Ani. Hymns f-h (6-8) seem to have originally been composed for liturgies in temples (Quirke, 2013, p. 46). The transcription given is based on Lepsius, 1842, pl. V.

spell consists of lines 18-26¹⁰⁴. As typical, the text reads that Apophis is injured (*si3t*, presenting the stative form *si3t.ti*), delivered to the executioners – referred to as the executioners with the sharp knives (*imnh.w spd.w ds.w*) – who cut off (*spt*) his head, cut (*stp*) his neck, mistreat (*ir*) him, carry (*iwh*) him to the flame, and lastly deliver him to the flame. The lines immediately following concern the consequent effect of such tortures on Apophis, starting with the result of the use of fire. Besides, another important element is the impossibility for the evil serpent to conceive an heir. The existence of a successor was of utmost importance in ancient Egypt for its social implications since one of the main roles of the son was indeed to perform the funerary cult of his father, in this way assuring him the eternal afterlife.

Healing statue of Ramesses III

[21] *m-3.t shm-s im¹⁰⁵-s h'.w-k kk-s*
ks.w-k ss-k
ity m hnm.w ms.w-k h'.w-k m sby n h.t
nn hpr iw'.w-k m t3 pn
'3pp hfty n r' htm-n tw hr smsw
nn iwr-k nn iwr-tw n-k
nn msy-k nn msy-tw n-k
šsr-k m [23] sby n h.t sswn.t b3-k
nn š3s-f hr t3 nn nm-k hr st3.w šw
nn m3-tw-k nn g3-tw-k iw-k htm.ti
nn wnn šw.t-k '3pp hf.ty n r'
šp-k sbi¹⁰⁸

First, she will have power (over you), devour your flesh, eat your bones and you will burn.
Your children have been taken by Khnum and your body has gone to the fire.
Your heirs shall not come into existence on this earth.
Apophis, enemy of Ra, Horus the Elder has destroyed you.
You shall not conceive, no one shall be impregnated¹⁰⁶ by you.
You shall not generate, no one shall give birth to you.
You are killed as one who has gone to the fire which destroys your ba.
You shall not travel on the earth; you shall not traverse the Heights of Shu¹⁰⁷.
You shall not be seen, you shall not be noticed. Indeed you are destroyed.
Your shadow shall not exist, Apophis, enemy of Ra.
You shall perish, rebel.

¹⁰⁴ Drioton, 1939, p. 78-82.

¹⁰⁵ Read 'm.

¹⁰⁶ *iwr* properly means “to conceive”, “to become pregnant”, “to make pregnant”; Wb 1, 56.1-7.

¹⁰⁷ The clouds.

¹⁰⁸ Transcription based on Drioton, 1939, p. 78-79.

5.1.5. *Apophis's defeat as a ritual overthrowing*

The notion of the use of fire against Apophis is even more emphasized in a totally different kind of text, namely in the *Book of Overthrowing Apophis*, which, according to its nature, demanded very detailed descriptions and transparency. Its purpose is already denoted in the titles of the various “books” which make up the collection of texts – including also Ra’s monologue about the creation – concerning Apophis’s felling (*hsf*). All of them are introduced by the expression *md3.t nt*. Fragmentary examples of such composition are known much earlier¹⁰⁹, even though the most completed one is that reordered on the Bremner-Rhind papyrus¹¹⁰ (British Museum EA 10188), dating back to the Ptolemaic Period¹¹¹.

Anyway, all the different spells have a very common purpose, namely that of protecting the sun god from Apophis while travelling in his bark. Such utterances would consequently apply the king too, guarding him from his enemies¹¹².

The text is very repetitive in its content and essentially consists of an invocation to various deities with the purpose of smiting Apophis, defeating him and ending his existence. Nevertheless, some key phrases and concept actually have interesting implications. Various passages of the text concern indeed Apophis’s destruction by fire, especially by means of the devouring flames of Eye of Horus. It is well known that for the Ancient Egyptian death by fire meant the total destruction of the physical body and therefor non-existence.

¹⁰⁹ In addition to spells inscribed on the healing statue of Ramesses III, the concerned instances are: pBrooklyn 47.218.138 edited by Goyon (1971), which is actually a parallel of such statue; two Middle Kingdom papyri from the Ramesseum, namely pRamesseum X (1,1-2,2) and XVI (7a,5-8,7), edited by Gardiner (1955, pls. 43 and 51); a magical stela from Karnak (Cairo JE 37058), edited by Daressy (1917), who dated it to the XIX Dynasty. On such incantations cf. also Altenmüller, 1979. To those instances we must add the XX Dynasty unpublished papyrus from the Turin Museum (CGT 54065), where utterances addressed against Apophis follow Atum’s monologue about the creation. On this papyrus see Roccati, 1980 and, in regard to such incantations, p. 225-226. On this kind of literary texts cf. also Goyon, 1975, col. 354-355.

¹¹⁰ The *Book of Overthrowing Apophis* is accompanied by three additional works, namely the *Songs of Isis and Nephthys*, the *Ritual of Bringing in Sokar*, and, last but not least the *Names of Apophis, which shall not be*. According to their ritual nature, they were probably a collection of texts belonging to the temple library. Besides, the first two compositions were most likely part of the Osirian mysteries. With its length of ten columns and a half (22,1– 32,12), each made up on average by twenty-five lines, the *Book of Overthrowing Apophis* – the third in the succession of works on the papyrus – is definitely the most extensive text of the collection. (Faulkner, 1933, p. 6-8).

¹¹¹ The colophon dates back to the reign of Alexander, the successor of Philip Arrhidaeus. The exact provenience of the papyrus is unknown but it is most likely of Theban origin, since the titles of priest Nesmin – the last owner of the papyrus – listed in the colophon are in connection with the gods of Thebes (Faulkner, 1936, p. 121).

¹¹² Faulkner, 1933, p. 3-8.

First of all, uncertainties in translations have to be born in mind, namely the two different and opposed possibilities of interpretation of some verb forms, i.e. *sdm-n-f* forms which alternatively can be intended as passive forms followed by dative (*sdm n-f*). According to the choice that the translator makes, the meaning shifts from Ra taking part in the struggle or, on the contrary, to Ra acting passively and having other deities to fight Apophis for him. It is quite a central issue since in some paragraphs Ra himself is speaking, as introduced, for instance, at the beginning of the *Book of knowing the creations of Ra and of felling Apophis* (pBremner-Rhind, 26,21 – 32,12) as well as in further passages. His recitation is introduced as the speech of the Lord of All (*nb-r-dr*), a designation, which among other deities, also refers to Ra.

After narrating his coming into existence and the creation of the world, Ra speaks of the slaughtering of Apophis either having taken part in it (*sdm-n-f*) or just watching it as a spectator (*sdm n-f*, i.e. passive form + dative). Unfortunately, due to grammar ambiguity, we cannot know which one of the two options was actually the correct one in the mind of the ancient Egyptians. However, the second interpretation is generally preferred and it is actually in line with the textual examples that have been quoted above. On the contrary, Faulkner, editor of the text, intended the concerned verb forms as active suffix conjugations, rather than as passive forms¹¹³. However, the excerpt of the composition that will be quoted below escapes this grammatical issue.

In regard to the tortures inflicted to the serpent, he is said to be bounded, thrust by spears, decapitated and cut to pieces with knives. The composition is particularly eloquent on the body mutilation – dealing with the removal of the serpent's head but also with that of other parts of his body – that takes place after Apophis has been fettered and deprived of his strength. When compared to the above cited texts, the element of the burning fire is actually more recurrent in this composition. This is actually a consequence of very practical nature of such book. As a matter of fact, the composition consisted of spells for priest to utter and of practical instructions to follow for the execration ritual to be properly performed. Moreover, the idea of total destruction is deeply stressed by important concepts such as the ability to copulate, the remembrance of someone's name, and the necessary integrity of a being's parts, all of which are fundamental preconditions to existence. A very representative passage of the

¹¹³ Cf. Faulkner, 1937 and 1938.

text¹¹⁴ is given here below as an example of the composition's nature, terminology¹¹⁵ and particularities.

Book of Overthrowing Apophis

[25.10] <i>iw-tn hr.w<t> shr.w<t></i>	[25.10] you have fallen and have been felled.
<i>hr-tn n r'</i>	Fall for Ra,
<i>hr-tn n dndn n 3.t-f</i>	fall to the anger of his moment,
<i>dmy¹¹⁶-tn n-f</i>	perish for him,
<i>tmy-tn</i>	be annihilated.
<i>sh¹¹⁷tm-f tn</i>	He destroys you,
<i>shr-f tn</i>	he throws you down,
<i>bhn-f tn</i>	he cuts you,
<i>nik [25.11]-f tn</i>	he punishes [25.11] you.
<i>sikn-f tn</i>	He annihilates you,
<i>sk-f rn-tn</i>	he destroys your name,
<i>bhn-f b3-tn</i>	he cuts your ba,
<i>hnfi(-f) tn</i>	he burns you,
<i>hmt-f tn</i>	he annihilates you,
<i>rth-f tn</i>	he restrains you,
<i>sswnw-f tn</i>	he makes you suffer,
<i>hr-f tn</i>	he makes you fall,
<i>hr-tn n imy</i>	you fall on the flame,
<i>sh¹¹⁸tm [25.12]-s tn</i>	she annihilates [25.12] you
<i>imi-tn wn</i>	so that you will not be.
<i>idmy dm-tn sp 2</i>	Oh, you who perish, you will perish (twice)
<i>dmy ir-f tn</i>	you will indeed perish.
<i>dmy-tn dmy b3-tn</i>	You will perish, your ba will perish.
<i>dmy-tn dmy h3-tn</i>	You will perish, your body will perish.
<i>dmy-tn dmy sw.t-tn</i>	You will perish, your shadow will perish.
<i>dmy-tn</i>	You will perish.
<i>nn wn-tn nn wn [25.13] b3-tn</i>	You shall not be, [25.13] your ba shall not be.
<i>nn wn-tn nn wn h3-tn</i>	You shall not be, your body shall not be.
<i>nn wn-tn nn wn sw.t-tn</i>	You shall not be, your shadow shall not be.
<i>nn wn-tn nn wn 'nh-tn</i>	You shall not be, your life shall not be.
<i>nn wn-tn nn wn nhp-tn</i>	You shall not be, your generative power(?) shall not be.
<i>nn ts tp-tn m h'.wt-tn¹¹⁹</i>	Your head shall not be attached to your body.

¹¹⁴ For a complete English translation see Faulkner, 1937 and 1938. The hieroglyphic transcription is given in Faulkner, 1933.

¹¹⁵ Unfortunately, the English translation is not be able to express every nuance of the terms employed, since different terms in the original ancient Egyptian text will necessarily be translated in English with the same word.

¹¹⁶ Read *tm*. The same spelling also occurs below.

¹¹⁷ The text has the metathesis *shmt*. Also occurring below.

¹¹⁸ Once again, the same metathesis.

¹¹⁹ Transcription based on Faulkner, 1933, p. 53.

As one can immediately note, the vocabulary of verbs which are connected with destruction and annihilation has notably been enriched, employing many synonyms to underline the concept that they express. They are: *dm* (“to cut”), *sh̄tm* and *h̄tm*¹²⁰ (“annihilate”), *bhn*¹²¹ (“to cut to pieces”), *sk* (“to perish”), *hn̄f̄i* (“burn”), *n̄ik* and *s̄nk* (“punish”, “be punished”), *sswn* (“to make someone suffer”), *rth* (“to restrain”), *m* (“to devour”, “to swallow”), *nn wnn* (“not to become”). More terms with negative meaning are also found throughout the composition, such as: *dr* (“to exterminate”), *ntb* (“to swallow” or “to consume by a flame”), *h̄d̄i* (“to destroy”, “to damage”), *wsh* (“to burn”), *dndn* (“to cut”, “to chop off the head”), *nn h̄pr* (“not to become”), *wbd* (“to burn”), *psi* (“to cook”), and *tm* (“to perish”). Undoubtedly, all of them are very explicit in their meaning. Besides, the large variety of terms and the use of synonyms is a way to emphasize the total destruction or the enemies of Ra. As a matter of fact, their repetitive utterance is way of strengthening the concept that they express.

This is actually the first time that defeat by means of the destruction of *every single* part – and not only bodily parts – that makes up a being is mentioned. In the same way in which such entities are annihilated, Apophis’s name is forgotten (24,12-13). This appears to be the only proper way to condemn Apophis to absolute non-existence. Thus, it is impossible to misunderstand the implications of the texts. Its transparency is striking: a god is indeed killed, destroyed and consequently condemned to suffer “second death”. This might actually mean that to condemn a divine being to total eradication it is not sufficient to just deprive him of his strength and slaughterer his body, both achieved by means of divine weapons and god’s magic (*hk̄3*). According to ancient Egyptian beliefs, the physical integrity of the body was of utmost importance and this idea impregnates many spells from the various collections of funerary texts, since, without the corpse, the non-physical entities of a human being would definitely perish. Does this apply to gods to? Apparently, it does not. Or, at least, this is what the episode of the struggle between Ra and Apophis seems to show. This first impression is supported by the stories of other gods who experienced also dismemberment and, above all of them by Osiris, who, even though not properly completed in all of his bodily parts, was actually restored and allowed to live an afterlife.

¹²⁰ The meaning of *h̄tm* is “to destroy” or “to exterminate” and is usually used in negative form as something the dead is not supposed to suffer (Zandee, 1960, p. 49).

¹²¹ The cutting to pieces aims at total destruction (Zandee, 1960, p. 148).

To add even more devastating force to such a destruction, the *Book of Overthrowing Apophis* operates both on physical and non-physical entities – i.e. ba, name (*rn*), powers (*ꜥḥ.t*), shadow (*šw.t*) – not only destroying the serpent in his physical being, but also in all of these fundamental parts¹²². This concept is also stressed symbolically by determinative signs. As a matter of fact, all of these terms – as well as Apophis’s name¹²³ along with his appellation as “the rebel” (*sbi*) and “the roared” (*hmhm.ty*) – have the hieratic determinative of dead man¹²⁴. The same also applies to terms denoting physical elements such as head (*tp*), body (*ḥꜥ*), and heart (*ib*) but even to verbs. The verb *ḥsf*, ever-present in texts dealing with the driving off of the evil serpent from the sun bark, indeed has the same determinative, possibly suggesting a more violent meaning than the standard “to repel” or “to drive off”. It might thus be considered a euphemism for “to slay” or even “to kill”, as suggested above for spells from the *Coffin Texts*¹²⁵.

The deprivation of Apophis’s ba and shadows are not limited to the execration ritual recoded in the *Book of Overthrowing Apophis*. On the contrary, a mention of this is found in the Hours Ritual and more precisely in the second hymn of the 7th hour. There, we read indeed that Isis has overthrown Apophis and taken away his ba and shadow, hence preventing him to recollect his strength¹²⁶.

5.1.6. Apophis's defeat defined as a murder

Despite all this, as Borghouts points out, the terms describing Apophis’s slaughtering are various and brutal, but the verb *smꜥ* (“to kill”) would be found nowhere apart from titles of Graeco-Roman Period temple rituals¹²⁷. This is true to a certain extent, namely when texts explicitly deal with Apophis, but if his name is not

¹²² In this regard a passage reads: *nn wn-tn nn wn bꜥ-tn; nn wn-tn nn wn ḥꜥ-tn; nn wn-tn nn wn šw.t-tn*.

¹²³ The name of Seth too has the same negative determinative, even though, he is actually acting as defender of the sun god. For example, see 23,21; Faulkner, 1933, p.48. Moreover, Apophis’s name is written in red ink and, since red is the color of adversity, his body was indeed believed to be of the same tint. In the XXX Dynasty ophiology treaty (two independent rolls catalogued Brooklyn 47.218.48 and 47.218.85) he is indeed described in the following terms: “As for the great snake Apophis, he is entirely red, his belly is white, and there are four teeth in his mouth. If he bites a man, (he) dies immediately” (1, 16; Sauneron, 1989, p. 9, § 15). For the god’s identification with a known species of snake see Sauneron, 1989, p. 148-149.

¹²⁴ Examples are scattered throughout the entire composition. For instance, see 24, 16; Faulkner, 1933, p.50.

¹²⁵ See p. 169.

¹²⁶ A German translation is available in Assmann, 1975, p. 106.

¹²⁷ Borghouts, 2007, p. 27.

mentioned and his identity is just implied, one exception at least does exist. It consists in a passage from *The Contendings of Horus and Seth* (pChester Beatty I, 4,4-4,5). In the first phase of the trial which has to assign Osiris's legacy to his legitimate successor, Seth is invited to set out his arguments. He justifies his claims with the following words:

The Contendings of Horus and Seth

<i>ir ink ink stš ʿ3 ph.ty m-hny (t3) psd.t</i>	As for me, I am Seth, great of strength among (the) Ennead.
<i>hr tw-i sm3m p3 [4,5] <p3>¹²⁸ hft n p3 r3</i>	Thus, I kill the enemy of Ra daily,
<i>m-mn.t</i>	
<i>iw-i m h3.t n wi3-n-hh</i>	when I am at the prow of the bark of millions.
<i>iw nn rh ntr nb ir-f¹²⁹</i>	No other god knows how to do it.

The enemy of Ra is obviously Apophis, even though the text silences his identity. The mention of the fact that Seth, at the prow of the bark¹³⁰, is the sole one to be able to fight the opponent of the sun god recalls CT 160 and its later version BD 108. The central point of this passage is the use of the term *sm3* in Seth's direct speech. Its employment demonstrates that, according to ancient Egyptian beliefs, Apophis is not simply made harmless and repelled but is ideally properly killed every day. Despite that the evil serpent is actually a very dangerous entity which must be vanquished to maintain order, Egyptian sources actually show some restraint when it came to dealing with his murder so openly. Thus, the verb *sm3* can be employed only if Apophis's name is not pronounced.

¹²⁸ Dittograph due to the passage from one line to another.

¹²⁹ Gardiner, 1932, p. 41, lines 12-14.

¹³⁰ For this aspect of Seth as well as for an overview of the different ancient Egyptian sources testifying it, see Nagel, 1929. The presence of Seth in the solar bark to repel Apophis has also been investigated by te Velde (1967, p. 99-108) and lately by Kremenska, 2015. In some other instances the god Thoth actually replaces him and plays the role of slayer of the god's enemies; on this see Otto, 1938, in particular p. 77-78. From the iconographic point of view, during the I millennium BD, the role of Seth is often taken over by Horus; cf. the vignette from the papyrus of the priest of Amun Djed-Khonsu-iuf-ankh in Piankoff, Rambova, 1957, p. 158, fig. 64 and pl. 19.

5.1.7. *Dead (mwt) in the form of the turtle*

As we have seen, sources generally do not employ terms such as “to kill” but use many different and more or less brutal synonyms, which concerns slaughtering as well as annihilation, to express this concept. Similarly, texts never say that Apophis is actually dead (*mwt.w*) but prefer to use more neutral expression, such as the recurrent stative form of the verb *hr* (“to fall”), which is likely a euphemism for “to die”, or the determinative of dead man. Nevertheless, when Apophis’s name is silenced, texts can break this rule. This is exactly what happens when the tortoise, a form of Ra’s enemy, is mentioned.

The tortoise and Apophis are closely associated. One of the names of Apophis listed in pBremner-Rhind indeed is “Apophis, the fallen, the turtle” (*ʿ3pp hr st3*)¹³¹. Besides, in the Ptolemaic Period the serpent’s name also occurs determined by the sign of the turtle¹³², and in the temples of Edfu and Dendera the massacre of the two of them is associated by symmetrical reliefs¹³³.

The first mention of the turtle as a hostile force to Ra is found in the *Coffin Texts*. To the basic formula of CT 367, a spell for not walking upside-down, the XII Dynasty coffin of Sepi (CG 28083) adds further verses, which should prevent the deceased to eat excrements if walking upside-down. There we read: “if you make me eat that, then Ra will eat the turtle”¹³⁴. This incantation clearly shows that the turtle is among the things that the sun god abominates. From the XVIII Dynasty on, religious and magical sources are more explicit in regard to the hostile forces represented by this animal and associate it with the chaos forces against which the sun god must constantly fight. In pBremner-Rhind (25,19) the officiating priest says: “I have overthrown (*shr-n-ī*) Apophis, the rebel, the tortoise, the ill-disposed one and the children of revolt from all their seats in every place in which they are”¹³⁵. Furthermore, in a passage from a book of incantation against Seth, the turtle is depicted as an entity capable of threatening the flood of the Nile River by means of ingurgitating its water. This episode closely recalls the one narrated in BD 108 – having its antecedent in CT 160 – in which we read that Apophis has gorged “seven cubits of high water” to impede the passage of the solar

¹³¹ 32,26; Faulkner, 1933, p. 90; Faulkner, 1938, p. 52.

¹³² Cf. Wb 1, 167.15 and the five occurrences in the temple of Esna.

¹³³ On this and other element connecting the tortoise with Apophis see Gutbub, 1979, p. 396 and p. 408-413.

¹³⁴ The text is transcribed in Lacau, 1908, p. 193, no. XLIV. The word *šṭ.w* (“turtle”) actually has the determinative of fish.

¹³⁵ The verse is written in red ink. Faulkner, 1933, p. 54-55; Faulkner, 1937, p. 171.

bark. All of these examples¹³⁶ demonstrate that the turtle is a representative of the forces of chaos, just like Apophis, and that the two of them should consequently be considered in the same way.

So, back to where we started the discourse about this malevolent animal, the statement that the turtle is dead is always found in connection with the triumph of Ra, leaving no doubt on the identity of the animal as an enemy of the sun god. The concerned passage occurs more than once as a refrain to underline its meaning. In BD 161, for instance, it is repeated four times. The refrain reads: “Ra lives! The turtle die!” (*nh r' mwt štw*).

5.2. Figurative and symbolical representations of the killing of Apophis

In the case of Apophis, not only is his death explicitly described, but we also have depiction of his overthrow. As we have seen analyzing the case of Osiris, depictions of gods' death do not exist. It is indeed a consequence of ancient Egyptian magical notion according to which figurative representation of an object would make it effective. The principle of substitution, whereby two- or three-dimensional objects took the place of the real object itself, was fundamental, for instance, for funerary provisions but also to assure the conservation of the deceased's body, being anthropoid coffins and statue possible substitutes of the mummy. Nonetheless, for the same principle, hieroglyphic signs could also prove to be dangerous. Consequently, starting from the royal burials of the late Old Kingdom, scribes tried to make them inoffensive, omitting or mutilating animal and human figures which could harm the deceased. This practice was even more developed in funerary contexts of the late Middle Kingdom¹³⁷. All of these also resulted in the custom to write the signs of dangerous animal transfigured with knives¹³⁸ or spears. Being Apophis not only a serpent but also a very dangerous demon, the determinative of his name was subject to this magical and symbolic mutilation. The mutilated sign of the serpent's names appear along with the mention of his dismemberment in the *Coffin Texts*.

¹³⁶ For those quoted above, as well as for further examples depicting the turtle as an enemy of the sun god and associating it with Apophis see the study on the figure of the turtle in ancient Egyptian religion and magic by van de Walle, 1953.

¹³⁷ Parkinson, 1999, p. 140.

¹³⁸ On the use of knives in the mutilation of signs, in execration seals, as well as in the figurative depictions see Ritner, 1993, p. 163-167.

The figurative representation of his slaughter is not limited to the serpent determinative, but comprises vignettes in funeral papyri and depiction on tombs' walls as well. All of these instances always show him overpowered and with some kind of physical violence imposed on him. He is represented restrained, with spears piercing the coils of his body, or while being decapitated by a cat (a form of the sun god) under the ished-tree¹³⁹ in Heliopolis. This subject in particular is engraved on tomb walls and depicted on numerous funerary papyri, it being one of the long series of vignettes accompanying the text of BD 17 (Figure 8). The serpent is struck with a knife, but in the papyrus of Iufankh, dated to the Ptolemaic Period, the cat seems to hit him directly with his paw, pressing his head firmly to the soil¹⁴⁰. In the glosses referring to the image, the deceased identifies himself with “the cat beside which the ished-tree was split in Heliopolis in the night in which the enemies of the Lord of All were destroyed”.

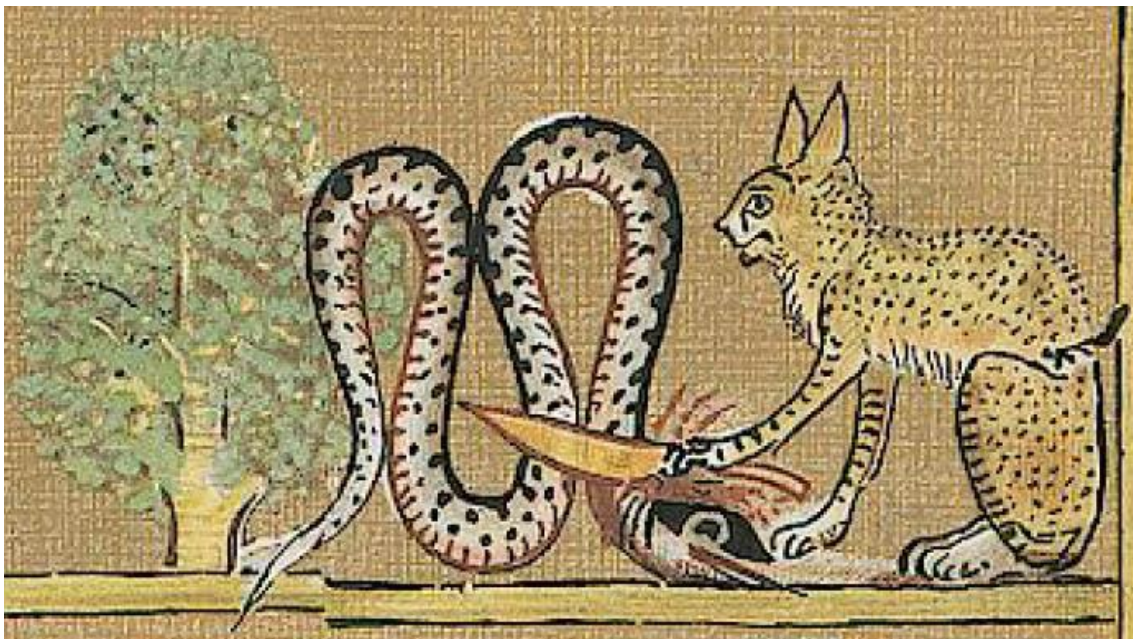


Figure 8. Vignette from chapter BD 17 from the XIX Dynasty papyrus of Hunefer, depicting the cat while cutting through Apophis's head with a knife. Source: Budge 1899, pl. 11.

The most common representation shows Apophis with a variable number of knives stuck in his coiled body, either with or without persecutors on the scene stubbing

¹³⁹ On the other hand, the ished-tree is the central element of a completely different figurative scene, namely the writing of the king's name and of the length of his reign on the tree's leaves and fruit by Thoth and Seshat with the purpose of assuring the king countless years of sovereignty. This motif is found on temple walls from the XVIII Dynasty up to the Graeco-Roman Period.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Quirke, 2013, p. 67.

him. Emblematic and recurring is also the depiction of Seth standing on the bow of the solar bark piercing Apophis with his spear (figure 9).

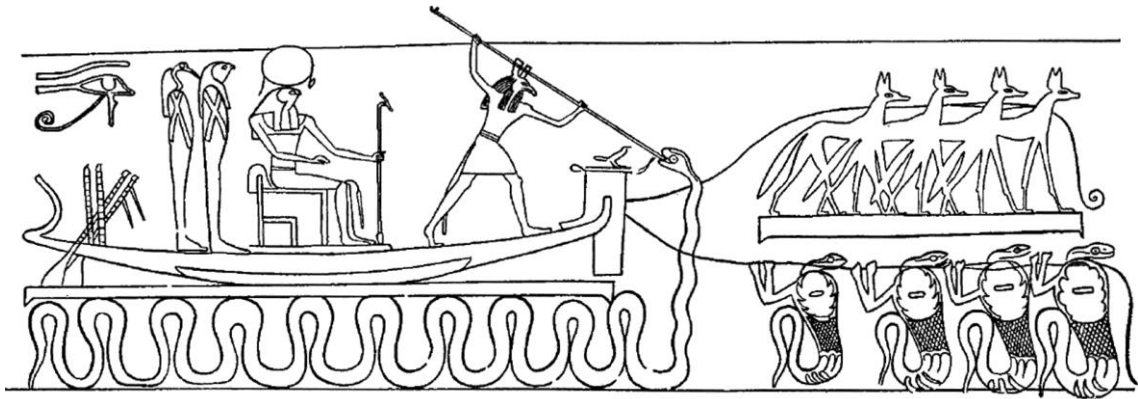


Figure 9. Vignette from the XXI Dynasty papyrus of Her-Uben B, depicting Seth at the prow of the solar bark while piercing Apophis with his spear. Source: Piankoff, 1957, p. 75, fig. 54, and pl. 2.

The figurative language is as brutal as the written one, with blood flowing out as the knife chops Apophis head (figure 8). Such representations not only were aimed at making the serpent inoffensive, as for signs' mutilation, but also to symbolically subdued Apophis, exactly functioning like the written word. But, despite this, images do not depict him dead. As a matter of fact, Apophis is never shown, for instance, with his head actually cut off. Similarly, torture by fire, recurrent in texts against Apophis, is never depicted.

On the contrary, execration rituals symbolically represented his total annihilation. The ceremonial of overthrowing Apophis, as reported on the Bremner-Rhind Papyrus, included magical practices aimed at this very purpose¹⁴¹. The papyrus is very precise on the matter, also including details on when and in which occasion the ritual must be performed – namely especially at dawn, noon, sunset and certain festivals. Next, the reader is instructed on shaping an image of Apophis out of wax¹⁴², which is then to be burnt. Similarly, he is also recommended to draw a picture of the serpent in green ink on a new shit of papyrus and to put into the fire. Both means are examples of destructive magic, but that of wax has actually interesting implications. As a matter of fact, contrary to papyrus sheets, when heated at a high temperature, wax

¹⁴¹ Apart from the Bremner-Rhind Papyrus, other execration rituals dealing with the figure of Apophis as representative of one's enemy are known. The magical papyrus Louvre E 5353, published by Herbin 2013, is one of those. Further spells addressed against him are found on the walls of the Ptolemaic Temples of Edfu and Dendera as well.

¹⁴² In BD 7 Apophis is referred to as "the sole one made of wax" (*w' mnḥ*).

burns leaving no ashes¹⁴³. As for this, intimidations addressed to Seth indeed state that he will be burnt up completely and he will not even manage to find his ashes¹⁴⁴. Consequently, the fact that no remainders are left is a perfect metaphor for the enemy's total destruction. His destruction is thus symbolically made permanent¹⁴⁵.

5.3. The meaning of Apophis's death

According to Assmann, the defeat of Apophis would take the form of an act of jurisdiction, since the serpent is representing the concept of chaos but also that of evil. Therefore, the fight is denoted as *sswn* ("punishment", "to punish")¹⁴⁶. This idea is also suggested by the verb *nīk* ("to punish"), a term indeed used in relation to god's enemies and consequently mostly to Apophis. It specifically refers to the cutting into pieces. Besides, in the *Book of Caves* (L.Q. XXXVIII) the verb itself is determined with the sign of the snake, emphasizing once again the idea that Apophis must be punished¹⁴⁷. This impression is particularly stressed in the book of *Amduat*, in which the term is almost omnipresent when dealing with Apophis¹⁴⁸. Moreover, after his triumph, Ra is proclaimed justified against Apophis (*m3' hrw r' r' 3pp*), as in the closing sentence of BD 39. Yet, this conception seems to be completely lacking in Middle Kingdom evidence.

But not all of the compositions about the struggle have a legal connotation. Next to them we also find text in which the violent aspect of his punishment predominates. However, all of this is in close connection with another key concept, namely the use of fire in the struggle, an aspect which is prevalent in execration rituals. Nevertheless, in ancient Egypt death by fire was conceived as a punishment for various crimes, among

¹⁴³ Besides, in the hot climate of Egypt, wax actually starts to melt even when just exposed to sunligh. This fact possibly suggested to the ancient Egyptian a connection between the sun god and this material, which in the *Ritual of Embalming* indeed is designated as a substance originated from the eye of Ra (Raven, 1983, p. 29-30).

¹⁴⁴ See p. 211-212.

¹⁴⁵ Kousoulis, 2003, p. 366.

¹⁴⁶ Assmann, 1995, p. 53.

¹⁴⁷ Zandee, 1960, p. 282-283.

¹⁴⁸ Another example is a passage found in the middle register of the seventh hour of the *Amduat*, which refers to four goddesses bearing snakes (§§ 518-521; Hornung, 1963a, p. 121-122):

ntr.wt nīky.t 3pp m dw3.t
hsf.wt hwt.t n hfti.w nw r'
wnn-sn m shr pn hr nīk.wt-sn
nīk-sn 3pp m dw3.t hrw nb

They are the goddess who punish Apophis in the Duat
and who repel the attacks of the enemies of Ra.
They are (represented) in this condition, carrying their "Punisher".
They punish Apophis in the Duat every day.

which rebellion, adultery, sacrilege, murder and conspiracy to murder¹⁴⁹. As a chastisement for wrongdoers, it is mentioned as early as the *Pyramid Texts* and is attested as a practice since the First Intermediate Period¹⁵⁰. The aim of such practice as a punishment was that of destroying the body and denying every possibility of an afterlife. This custom especially occurs in the Netherworld, where the enemies of the god have it inflicted¹⁵¹. Punishment by fire might occur either after the execution of the rebel or while he was still alive¹⁵². As Zandee points out, Apophis is a rebel against Ra and consequently he is punished just like human sinners are, i.e. being fettered and burnt. According to Assmann, the burning of Apophis by the uraeus serpent of Ra might also be considered in an optic of sacrifices. A line in pBremner-Rhind reads indeed: “Apophis is fallen into the fire, the evil-doer is a burnt offering” (33,14-15)¹⁵³. Something similar can be said of beheading. As a matter of fact, the practice of decapitation of gods’ enemies in the afterlife is well known in funerary literature and indeed is depicted in scenes of the *Amduat*, the *Book of Gates*, and the *Book of Caverns*. The loss of his head was one of the greatest fears of the deceased and many spells were actually conceived to evade this terrible possibility. Consequently Apophis, who is punished for being an enemy of the sun god, is condemned to suffer “second death”, the eternal one.

5.4. Killed but not defeated

At this point, one can argue that Apophis always comes back to life, being only temporarily defeated and not truly murdered. This is true, of course. Whereas in the *Book of the Day* the overthrow of Apophis almost seems definitive – or at least long-lasting for that specific day – the repetition of the serpent’s attacks in the *Amduat* and in the *Book of Gates* would demonstrate the direct opposite¹⁵⁴. Besides his reappearing, a further element proving the impossibility for him to remain dead comes from the *Book of Gates*. In the sixth hour (scene 35), when Apophis is slayed, and twelve heads

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Leahy, 1984, p. 202.

¹⁵⁰ Grieshammer, 1977, col. 206.

¹⁵¹ For the various practices and in regard to the terms employed see Zandee, 1960, p. 133-142.

¹⁵² For evidence of the both possibilities see Leahy, 1984.

¹⁵³ ‘3pp hr [33,15] n h.t nik.w m sb-n-h.t. Faulkner, 1933, p. 93.

¹⁵⁴ Müller-Roth, 2008, p. 480-481.

emerge from his coils¹⁵⁵ (figure 10) the text states that “(when) the heads who are in him come forth, he will perish¹⁵⁶”. However, after Ra has passed by them, the heads go back into the body of Apophis¹⁵⁷. So, once the heads are inside the coils of Apophis, the serpent is consequently revived.

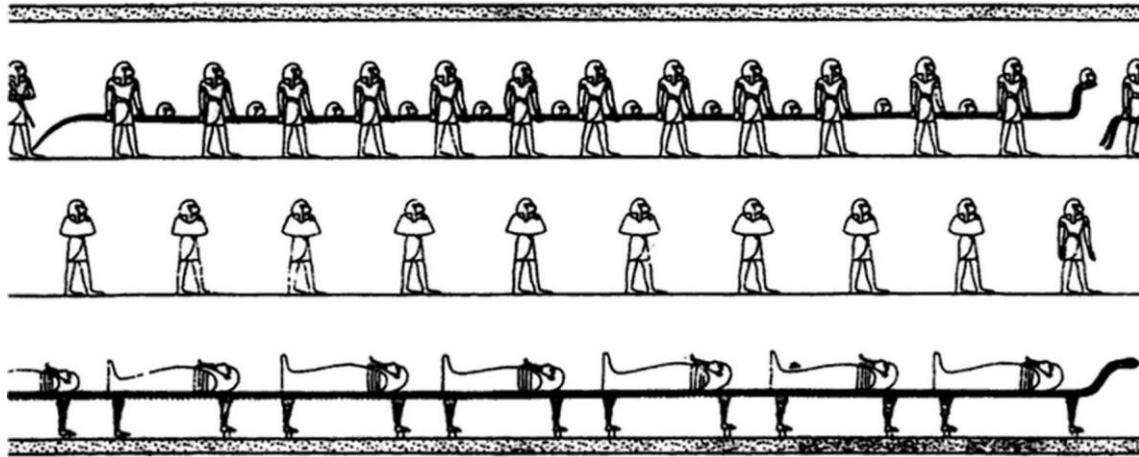


Figure 10. Vignette from the middle register of the sixth division of the *Book of Gates* depicting the twelve heads of those whom Apophis has swallowed rising from the serpent's body. Source: Hornung, 1999, p. 71 fig. 35.

Observing the myth from a symbolical point of view, the reason of the impossibility to actually kill Apophis is obvious. As a deity, he embodied the principle of Chaos, the direct opposite of order and Maat, personified by Ra. Even though extremely negative, such a powerful force could not be eliminated once for all. On the contrary, it had absolutely to be preserved in order to maintain the balance with Maat and light and guarantee the cosmic order. Thus, to preserved order, chaos had to be constantly overcome. Consequently, this implied its existence as well as that of its representative, namely Apophis. Thus, as Hornung points out, chaos, as well as Apophis, are both immortal¹⁵⁸. The numerous attacks unceasingly launched by him throughout the same composition, even though defeated in the course one of the previous hours, might be sufficient to demonstrate his continuous revival. Yet, this could actually prove to be just the consequence of the arrangement of various elements

¹⁵⁵ The heads coming out of his body during the slaughtering symbolize the souls that Apophis has swallowed and that are now let free. A wall painting in the tomb of Ramesses VI portrays this scene, representing Apophis with twelve heads above his back.

¹⁵⁶ *pr tp.w imy.w-f sk-f*; Hornung, 1979, p. 211.

¹⁵⁷ Cf Hornung, 1979, p. 213; 1980, p. 156.

¹⁵⁸ Hornung, 1956, p. 28.

derived from earlier traditions. Such interpretation would be supported by the fact that Apophis's reiterated defeat is actually not identical to the previous one¹⁵⁹. In practice, the deities who defend Ra and the means of repulsion they employ when the solar bark is attacked change from an hour to another.

The concept of Apophis's daily return to life is also stressed by his form. As a matter of fact, from a symbolical point of view, snakes were a symbol of rejuvenation and were consequently opposed to mortality¹⁶⁰. Chapter BD 87 indeed reads: "I am the serpent (*sz-t3*, literally "the son of the earth") whose years are long, who dies (*sdr*¹⁶¹) and who is born every day. I am the serpent who is at the limits of the earth. I die (*sdr-i*), I am generated (*ms.kwi*), I am renewed (*m3.kwi*), I am rejuvenated (*rnp.kwi*) every day". The symbolic aspect, namely renewal, of this reptile is based on the fact that snakes shed their skin regularly and, in this way, not only do they not decay but they also are revived. The aim of spell BD 87 was consequently to allow the deceased to experience the same rejuvenation as snakes'. The image of the sun god as a child within the Ouroboros perfectly represents this concept embodied by snakes. This, as well as the need to maintain the balance between cosmic order and chaos, is the reason why Apophis cannot actually be killed.

Nevertheless, as we have seen, ancient Egyptian literature comprises the idea of the possible murder of Apophis. Whereas many texts just describe his daily defeat as a simple repulsion, other deal with it in brutal ways by means of physical tortures inflicted with weapons, magic and fire, all of which are supposed to condemn him to annihilation. Nevertheless, Apophis is never really killed and comes back to attack the solar bark every night. In a formula (section H) from the papyrus of the "head of the escort" (*hr.i kr'.w*)¹⁶² Amenemsaf (pLouvre 3292), dating back to the Third Intermediate Period, Apophis is indeed given the name of *wnn.ty*¹⁶³. Being the meaning of the verb *wnn* "to exist" this would perfectly show that Apophis cannot be successfully annihilated. However, in the text this name of Apophis stands obviously next to the mention of fire and that of a knife cutting through his flesh.

¹⁵⁹ Borghouts, 2007, p. 25.

¹⁶⁰ On this cf. Hopfner, 1914, p. 142.

¹⁶¹ For the equation sleep = death cf. Wb 4, 391.20. On this term see also Zandee, 1960, p. 84-85.

¹⁶² For the translation of this title see Nagel, 1929b, p. 7.

¹⁶³ The term is determined by the sign of a serpent with coils sliced by knives and is written in red ink. Therefore, we must not confound this designation of Apophis with the celestial deity *wnn.ty*, who carries a star in each of his two hands. As a celestial god, *wnn.ty* is known from the second hour of the *Book of Gates* (Cf. Wb 1, 317.10).

<i>in mh-k shk3-s hft.yw-k</i>	It is the uraeus ¹⁶⁴ who performs magic on your enemies.
<i>ph.ty is.t-k r dw-kd</i>	The physical strength of your crew is against the Evil of Character.
[5] <i>3w ib-k r sp hpr d(.t) n nhs</i>	Your heart is joyful at the time of the slaughter by <i>nhs</i> ¹⁶⁵ .
<i>3pp 3bh n nbi m wnm.yt</i>	Apophis is joined with <i>nbi</i> ¹⁶⁶ in the flame.
<i>ds krt.yw m iwf n wnn.ty</i> ¹⁶⁷	The knife of the cavern gods is in the flesh of the <i>wnn.ty</i> ¹⁶⁸ .

As name of Apophis, it also occurs among the “names of Apophis which shall not be”, listed in the pBremner-Rhind (line 32,29), next to his designation as *hr*, namely “the fallen one”¹⁶⁹. In other words, Apophis is said to be dead but, at the same time, also to be existing.

The overthrowing of Apophis is actually not to be taken literally but is to be considered more properly from an ideological point of view, namely that the Egyptian believed that a god could *hypothetically* be killed and condemned to suffer “second death”. Consequently, this would mean that Apophis is a god who can die. As emerging from the sources, it is more likely that the serpent god can be killed only by other deities, which indeed play the major role in all of the accounts of the struggle. When the deceased is involved, texts are more allusive and never mention the tortures that the transfigured human being was possibly supposed to inflict on the evil serpent. Yet, execration rituals have great importance and were meant to be performed by priests, namely non-divine beings. But, in this last instance, the magic practices performed according to the directions which are reported in such liturgies were not expected to work on their own, but actually to make more efficient the uttered spells in which Apophis’s defeat is performed by various gods.

¹⁶⁴ Literally “the encircler”.

¹⁶⁵ A god of the crew of the solar bark (Wb 2, 287.12).

¹⁶⁶ Nagel points out that the sign *nb* is crossed by a second vertical sign which resembles more a *i* than a *b*, even if such a ligature is not common; cf. 1929b, p. 43.

¹⁶⁷ Transcription based on Nagel, 1929b, p. 40.

¹⁶⁸ Quirke translates it “Existing-serpent” (2013, p. 523). On the contrary LGG (II, p. 418-419) records *wnty* as a designation of Apophis in two lines from pBremner-Rhind (22,22; 32,29) and translates it in general terms with the name “der Triumphator (?)”.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Faulkner 1933, p. 89-91; Faulkner, 1938, p. 52.

5.6. Summary and cross references

Apophis is the divine evil serpent representing the forces of chaos and darkness which constantly try to take over order. Consequently, he is the enemy of Ra and must be overcome daily in order to allow the sun god to traverse the Duat unarmed and to emerge from it every morning, regenerated. The struggle against him appears undoubtedly from the time of the *Coffin Texts* even though the fight is very allusive. However, the majority of the attestation dates back to the New Kingdom, when Apophis is fought in the *Books of the Netherworld* and in solar hymns. The euphemistic verb *hsf* (“to repel”), firstly used in the *Coffin Texts*, continues to occur next to more explicit terms denoting violence. Texts from the New Kingdom indeed describe the phases of the physical tortures inflicted to Apophis with many more details. Recurrent and long lasting is also the use of the stative form of the verb *hr*, almost omnipresent until the Ptolemaic Period, even though used next to brutal and raw descriptions of the fight. Depending on which aspect was more important to underline, texts employ different grammar forms to refer to the temporary death of the serpent god. As a matter of fact, in case of solar hymns, in which the aim of the composition was actually to exalt the sun god, the struggle is simply alluded to and stative forms are used to underline the state Apophis is in. Similarly, it denotes a concluded action and the use of stative forms shows that the serpent death was conceived as something real which ideally occurred every day. The use of fire and the total annihilation of the god are mentioned from the New Kingdom on and are even more accentuated in later sources. In the Ptolemaic Period the butchering of Apophis is the central core of execration rituals, a literary genre that demands more explicit terms. As a matter of fact, the aim of such texts was to condemn Apophis to suffer “second death” and, in order to achieve such purpose, the serpent had to be destructed in all of the part composing his being, both physical and non-physical. Besides, prior to the Graeco-Roman Period, the verb *smꜣ*, explicitly meaning “to kill”, is only used when the serpent’s identity is silenced. Similarly, Apophis is never said to be dead (*mwt.w*) except when referred to in form of a turtle and hence indirectly. However, his “second death” was also symbolized by the destruction of execration figurines. Next to literary sources, figurative ones also exist but actually do not portray him as dead.

Apophis’s death is to be interpreted as act of jurisdiction since the tortures inflicted on him represent the punishment of enemies and, after the serpent defeat, Ra is

declared justified against him. In this regard his death recalls the one inflicted to Seth, also designated as *hr.w*. Nonetheless, the death of Apophis is necessarily only temporary since the balance between chaos and order had to be maintained. As a matter of fact, the serpent's actual death would have caused the upheaval of order.

CHAPTER 6

SETH¹

Seth, the evil brother of Osiris and his murderer, is not what we can properly define either a dying god or a dead one. Nevertheless, in the *Pyramid Texts* in particular but also in the *Coffin Texts*, Seth is often said to have been struck (*hw*), slaughtered (*smj*), and killed (*ngj*, *kn*). To defeat him and avenge his father, Horus hurts Seth in the same way in which Seth harmed Osiris. This practice was actually a subterfuge to refer indirectly but in explicit terms to Osiris's violent assassination, and the terms used indeed are the same for both of the gods. Despite this, Seth is also one of the deities listed in the royal canon of Turin, among the gods who ruled over Egypt long before the earthly kings². He is the sixth in chronological order, succeeding Geb and Osiris and preceding Horus. The length of his reign is now missing³ but Meyer⁴ reports a period of two hundred years. He also appears in some spells from the *Pyramid* and *Coffin Texts* consisting of a list of gods said to have gone to/with their kas, a typical euphemism to describe someone's passing away⁵. According to his evil nature and to the punishment for his crime, Seth was also the victim of execration rituals and symbolical dismemberment of figurine representing him in his form of hippopotamus. From this point of view, the similarities with the serpent god Apophis are many. However, Seth's death is to be understood in the concept of the Osirian myth, being nothing else but the punishment for the "great evil deed" (*kn wr / kn j*) he committed.

As for Seth's death, te Velde offered an unusual interpretation, perhaps worth mentioning. First of all, he explains the duality between Osiris and Seth as that of death and life, being the former the representative of life arising from death and the latter the personification of life which produces death. Thus, Seth would want to get rid of death,

¹ For an introduction on the figure of Seth and on the various aspects of the god te Velde (1967) is fundamental but see also Hornung (1974). On the presence of Seth in the *Pyramid Texts* see Faulkner (1925) and on the god's polysemic character in the same composition see Mathieu (2011), who also cites additional bibliography divided into categories. The important role of the god in the ancient Egyptian pantheon from predynastic Egypt to the Graeco-Roman Period is discussed in Turner (2013). Seth was also considered a storm god; this aspect of his character is analyzed in Zandee (1963). On the contrary, Cruz-Uribe (2009) argues that he should not be considered a god of confusion and that his stormy nature would actually represent his power over the enemies of the sun god and of Egypt.

² On such evidence possibly showing that gods were equally affected by time see p. 24-25.

³ Cf. Gardiner, 1959, pl. I.

⁴ Meyer, 1904, p. 116.

⁵ On gods going to/with their ka see p. 37-47.

embodied by Osiris. The author explains this need as the behavior of the self-murderer who perceives death as his alter ego, whom he needs to murder⁶. This, of course, would result in committing suicide. Consequently, according to this interpretation, by killing his brother, Seth and his confederates would practically commit suicide. As a matter of fact, Seth's slaughtering and sacrifice are the result of the crime he has committed, and his evil action rebounds upon himself. In addition to this, te Velde adds that, as one who killed himself, Seth shall find no rest and, by means of his death, murder would also become the end of chaos and not only its climax. Because of this, the author wrote, murder can be celebrated as a sacrifice⁷.

6.1. The god who claimed to be immortal

Despite the fact that Egyptian sources mention more than once the possibility that Seth was actually violently killed, in a couple of early instances the god actually claims to be immortal. The first one is a passage from the *Pyramid Texts* in which the king hopes to avoid his day of death just like Seth did long before him.

PT 570

<i>nh-n-N hrw-f hr mwt</i>	N has escaped his day of ⁸ death
<i>mī r nht stš hrw-f hr mwt</i>	like Seth has escaped his day of death.
<i>nh-n-N smd.wt hr.t mwt</i>	N has escaped the half-month festival of death
<i>mī nh-t-stš smd.wt hr.t mwt</i>	like Seth has escaped the half-month festival of death.
<i>nh-n-N 3bd.w-f hr.w mwt</i>	N has escaped his Abedu-festival of death
<i>mī nh-t-stš 3bd.w-f hr.w mwt</i>	like Seth has escaped his Abedu-festival of death
<i>nh-n-N rnp.t-f hr.t mwt</i>	N has escaped his year of death
<i>mī nh-t-stš rnp.t-f hr.t mwt</i> ⁹	like Seth has escaped his year of death.

These few lines were actually enough to persuade Bonnet of Seth's invincibility¹⁰. He relates them to an inscription from the temple of Queen Hatshepsut at Deir el Bahari, and precisely to one found in the upper register of the northern wall of

⁶ He derived this explanation from Carp, who in his turn formulated his interpretation of suicide of melancholic individuals upon psychiatric practice and European literature.

⁷ Te Velde, 1967, p. 95-96.

⁸ Literally "under the control of".

⁹ Transcription based on Sethe, 1910, p. 292-293, §§ 1453a-h.

¹⁰ Cf. Bonnet, 1952, p. 714.

the middle colonnade¹¹. It reports the legend of the divine origin of the queen. The concerned paragraph comprises a speech of assembled gods in which they address Amun and exalt the might of the god's daughter. The passage reads that Amun has given her the "share of Horus in life" and the "years of Seth in dominion"¹². This is actually no real evidence of immortality, if anything just the metaphor for a long and mighty reign, long-lasting but not endless¹³. Besides, according to the royal canon of Turin, Seth's reign is actually shorter than those of Horus, which lasted 300 hundred years and of Thot, enduring over 3000 years¹⁴.

Nevertheless, also the *Coffin Texts* contain a reference to the possible immortality of Seth. In CT 564, a composition to assure the deceased not to be slaughtered in the place of execution of the god, the deceased identifies himself with Seth and states that he cannot perish (*tm*).

CT 564

<i>tm hr m ntr nm.t</i>	Not to fall in the place of slaughter of the god.
<i>wsir pw nn imn.t ...</i>	This is Osiris, the West...
<i>rh-f rn-f</i>	He knows his name,
<i>rh-n wsir rn-f</i>	Osiris ¹⁵ knows his name.
<i>tm ...</i>	Not ...
<i>[n] wn-n wsir N tn im-f</i>	This Osiris N is not in it.
<i>nts stš imy ntr.w</i>	She ¹⁶ is Seth who is among the gods.
<i>n tm wsir N¹⁷</i>	This Osiris N will not perish.

The statement that the deceased will not cease to exist ("second death"), is of utmost importance in funerary literature since he will live his eternal afterlife just like Osiris. Hence, the identification of the deceased with Seth is definitely not the medium to avoid death. On the contrary, the guarantee of not perishing is given by Osiris, with whose name the deceased is addressed, not by Seth.

¹¹ Cf. Naville, 1898, p. 1-2.

¹² The full hieroglyphic text is available in Sethe, 1906, p. 244. The passage concerned is IV, 244, 16-17: *dī-n-k n-s psš.t hr m 'nh rnp.wt stš m wzs*.

¹³ On the "years of Seth" see Wolfhart, 1966, p. 141 and Schäfer, 1932, p. 428.

¹⁴ Meyer's reading of 3126 years is uncertain (1904, p. 116). In his edition, Gardiner actually reads many more thousands years (Gardiner, 1959, pl. I).

¹⁵ M2NY has *-i* (yod). However, the following signs are obliterated.

¹⁶ Coffin B4C (Cairo 28086) belonged to a woman. M2NY has *ink* and presumably also the ending sentence, which is now missing, had the first person.

¹⁷ Transcription based on De Buck, 1956, p. 163 a-h.

Despite all of this, however, as te Velde points out, Seth takes part in the process of death and rebirth, being one of the deities who escort the sun god in his bark. He is even depicted in mummy form¹⁸, an image poles apart from that of an immortal god.

6.2. Euphemistic and explicit terms to describe Seth's death

As we have seen in the chapter about Osiris, as early as the *Pyramid Texts* sources compared the massacre of the dead Osiris to that of his evil brother. Those spells indeed read that Horus has done to Seth what Seth had previously done to his father¹⁹. The name of both gods is silenced but the ancient Egyptian clearly knew very well who the text referred to. Thanks to this artifice, the death of Osiris could be covertly narrated. Terms are very explicit in the beginning but as time goes by they are softened. As early as the appearance of the *Pyramid Texts*, we meet verbs such as *hwi* ("to strike") or *dr* ("to drive away") to refer to the violence inflicted upon both Osiris and Seth. Nevertheless, other terms denote the murder proper. They are verbs such as *sm3* ("to slaughter" or "to kill") more recurrent in the *Pyramid Texts* (PT 670, PT 580, CT 303, BD 173) than in the later funerary composition, *ng3* ("to kill") in PT 580, and *kn* ("to kill") in CT 303.

As emerging from PT 670 and PT 580, both of which describe the dismemberment of Seth, the god's death assumes a ritual value. As an enemy, he is treated exactly like a sacrificial victim and the pieces of his body are offered to Osiris, as explained in PT 543 and CT 839²⁰. Nevertheless, the *Pyramid Texts* do not mention Seth's total annihilation, on which later sources will actually insist on. On the contrary, as explained above, it is said that he has even escaped his day of death (PT 570). It seems quite contradictory considering the content of other spells of the composition and that of later sources, as well the fact that he was regarded to as a potential menace²¹. However, next to ritual dismemberment as a punishment, Seth was also thought to have lost parts of his body in the struggle with Horus for the domain over Egypt²².

In the *Book of the Dead* the gang of Seth is said to be annihilated as well as the enemies of Osiris but no clear mention of Seth by his name is made (BD 18).

¹⁸ For references see te Velde, 1967, p. 104, note 6.

¹⁹ On this see p. 109-113.

²⁰ See p. 111-112 and 67-68, respectively.

²¹ Cf. PT 485 (§1033c and §1035a) and PT 427 (§§777a-b).

²² This aspect is particularly stressed in the *Pyramid Texts*, where Horus is said to have torn him a thigh (PT 61), a finger (PT 69), a hand (PT 71), and his testicles (passim).

Nevertheless, more commonly, Seth is said to have fallen (*hr*), just like Apophis, neither with further addition nor combined with different specification and images. One of those is certainly in connection with the idea of punishment and slaughter. Indeed, it is said of that he “has fallen in his place of execution”, a typical expression also employed for the enemies of Ra and for Apophis in chapters of the *Book of the Dead*. For instance, in the Ptolemaic Period *Book of Glorification* (20,1-20,2) documented on various papyri²³ we read: “Seth has fallen in his place of execution and his confederates are under the control of the guardians of Aker²⁴”. A passage from the *Ceremony of Glorifying Osiris in the God’s Domain* recorded, for instance, on pMMA 35.9.21 expresses the same idea: “Seth has fallen to is slaughtering and the confederates of Seth are a burnt offering²⁵”. In the *Book of protecting the nšm.t-Bark*, after stating that Seth is annihilated and that Horus has avenged his father, it is said of Seth: “you have fallen to the earth and you will not rise²⁶”. The fact that *hr* is clearly a euphemism is made clear in a passage of the *Rite of Introducing the Multitude on the Last Day of Tekh* (pMMA 35.9.21) in which the falling (*hr*) of Seth is in association with non-existence²⁷.

The use of the verb *hr* is very common in texts from the Ptolemaic Period and is quite surprising. As a matter of fact, execration rituals of that epoch are extremely raw in describing tortures inflicted to the god’s most dangerous enemies and pBremner-Rhind (pBritish Museum EA 10188) is certainly the most explicit example. Moreover, the cult of dead gods as ancestors had particular fortune in the Ptolemaic Period and so a divine death was something the ancient Egyptians were well familiar with – or at least something that they conceived as possible and real. Nevertheless, somehow, the way they referred to the defeat of an evil god shows us that his death was somehow rejected. Once again, the explanation of such reticence is to be explained in connection with the idea of the world and of cosmic order that the ancient Egyptian had. Consequently, since the balance between order and chaos had to be maintained, Seth, representative of disorder, could not be eradicated. Nevertheless, execration rituals were aimed at defeating the enemies of the king or of a private person, which were metaphorically embodied by either Seth or Apophis. So, in this way their annihilation was necessary and justified by practical needs.

²³ On this composition see p. 102-103.

²⁴ *stš hr m hb.t-f smy.w-fm* [20,2] *s3.w 3kr*; Szczudlowska, 1972, p. 63.

²⁵ [18,13] *stš hr n š ‘d-f sm3.yw stš m sb-n-sd.t*

²⁶ *hr-k r t3 nn ts*; Chassinat, 1894, p. 109, line 12.

²⁷ [49,1] *sbi-k hr nn wnn-f*. “He who rebelled against you has fallen and shall not exist”.

6.3. Execration rituals against Seth

As murderer of Osiris, Seth is representative of the forces of chaos trying to take over the cosmic order, and from the Persian Period on, namely after the decline of his cult, Seth turns into the ultimate enemy. This connotation practically associates him with another evil god, Apophis, the enemy of Ra. Therefore, like in the case of the serpent god, collections of spells to utter against Seth were composed. Their purpose was that of incapacitating but also to magically kill him. Execration rituals against Seth are found in the *Book of Protecting the nšm.t-Bark* and in the rituals of the temple of Osiris in Abydos. As for the former, it is inscribed in the Ptolemaic temple of Dendera, in tomb XIX Dynasty of Ramose in Deir el-Medina (TT 7), and on three papyri. They are pLouvre 3129 (cols. A,1-B,39), pBritish Museum 10252 (cols. 22,1-23,35) and pMMA 35.9.21²⁸. The Abydos texts include the Ptolemaic Period pLouvre 3129 and pBritish Museum EA 10252 (funerary papyrus of Pakharekhons Pamerem) which present the *Book of Protecting the nšm.t-Bark* as well. The ritual is entitled *Ritual for causing the downfall of Seth and his followers* (*n.t- ' n šhr stš hn ' sm3.yw-f*) and used to be performed “in the temple of Osiris, foremost of the Westerners, the great god, lord of Abydos on all days, as well as in all temples”²⁹. The ritual inscribed in these two papyri is almost identical to the one performed against Apophis in Thebes and recorded in pBremner-Rhind (pBritish Museum EA 10188). Even the wording is almost matching³⁰.

An interesting image used by the text to describe Seth's death is the euphemism depicting him lying on his side. This expression is certainly the most known and likely widespread expression to allude to the death of Osiris. So, borrowed from the victim, this idiom condemns the murderer. In an execration ritual, such a euphemism is unnecessary and quite unexpected. Nevertheless, even though the condemnation to death of Seth is softened by this expression, the lines immediately following are more explicit and even deal with “second death”.

²⁸ Goyon (1969) published a synoptic edition of the texts.

²⁹ Schott, 1929, p. 5.

³⁰ A comparison between the Abydos texts and the Theban version has been made by Gee, 2010.

Ritual for causing the downfall of Seth and his followers

<i>m33-sn stš hr(.w) [19] hr gs-f</i>	They see <u>Seth fallen [19] on his side</u> (i.e. dead) ³¹ ,
<i>in(.w) t3 m s.t-f nb</i>	deprived of the land in all his places.
<i>sw hr nh.wy wns m i(3)b</i>	<u>Sw is lamenting, Wns is in mourning</u> ³² .
{...}	{...}
[20] <i>nn nb-sn nn k3(.w) sbi.w</i>	[20] <u>Their lord is no more, he who planned the rebellion is no more</u>
<i>ti sw hr(.w) m šn 'f</i>	<u>since he has fallen in his captivity(?)</u>
<i>iry š 't m h 'w n pfy whi</i>	<u>Slaughter is committed on the limbs of this one, the unsuccessful one.</u>
<i>hts h3.(t)-f n wnmy.t</i> ³³	<u>His body is prepared</u> ³⁴ for the Devourer (i.e flame).

As for Apophis, fetters³⁵, weapons³⁶, fire and magic are necessary to incapacitate and kill Seth as well. Thus, the flames of the fire burn him and the magical spells of Thoth and Isis hit him.

<i>shwr tw r 'ds-f</i>	Ra himself curses you.
<i>hr-k m hh.w n nsr.t-f</i>	You fall in the flames of his flame ³⁷ .
<i>šn[43] tw dhw.ti m hk3.w-f</i>	Thoth conjures you with his magic.
<i>wdb-n-f ir(.t)-n-k r-k</i>	He has turned against you what you have done.
<i>mdd-n tw s.t wr(.t) hk3.w</i>	Isis, great in magic, has struck you.
<i>3m-n-s tw m-tp r3.w-s</i> ³⁸	She burned you with her spells.

Just like in texts dealing with the repulsion of Apophis, the Abydos texts also employ the ever-present verb *hsf* (“to repel”), which, considering the nature of the composition, has to be interpreted as a euphemism for a violent murder. As a matter of fact, it is said that if Seth comes from each one of the four cardinal points, the gods of the corresponding regions will fight him off (*hsf*)³⁹. The same concept is expressed in *The Revelations of the Mysteries of the Four Balls*, but there the verb employed is *shr* (“to overthrow”)⁴⁰.

³¹ Papyrus British Museum EA 10252 has: “They see Seth falling on his flank” (*hr stš hr gs-f*).

³² Starting from this line, the list of the places where Seth is lamented on follows.

³³ Transcription after Schott, 1929, p. 15 and 17.

³⁴ Literally “completed”.

³⁵ Cf. Schott, 1929, p. 39, lines 17 and 21. The passage mentioned consists of two spells following the instruction for the tying up of the figurine representing the god.

³⁶ There is an appeal to the slaughterer who cuts with a knife the figurine representing Seth. Cf. Schott, 1929, p. 47 and 49.

³⁷ Nezret is a snake goddess as well as an appropriate name of the uraeus.

³⁸ Transcription after Schott, 1929, p. 29.

³⁹ Cf. Schott, 1929, p. 31 and 33.

⁴⁰ Cf. Goyon, 1975a, p. 387 and 389.

Spells against Seth are also found in the papyrus of Imuthes (pMMA 35.9.21), in which a ritual for the protection of Osiris, named *The Revelations of the Mysteries of the Four Balls*, is entirely preserved⁴¹. Other papyri offer some excerpts of the ritual, completely or partially corresponding to the first four stanzas of pMMA 35.9.21. They are: pBerlin 3037⁴², pBrooklyn 47.218.138⁴³, pLouvre 3237 and pLouvre 3239⁴⁴. To them must be added the monumental version engraved in vertical columns (third register) on the north, east and west walls of one of the chambers (room H 2) belonging to the Osirian complex of the terrace of the Hibis temple in el-Khargeh oasis⁴⁵. In the ritual not only is Seth depicted as the enemy of Osiris but also as Ra's. In this regard, some lines in pMMA 35.9.21 highlight the opposition between Seth and the sun god who fights against him just like he does against Apophis. Such identity of Seth as sun god's enemy is diametrically opposed to his role as defender of Ra against Apophis when escorting the sun god in the solar bark. However, the content of the text corresponds to a typical execration ritual, even though not as detailed as the *Book of Overthrowing Apophis*, and, next to the punishments inflicted to Seth, it also alludes to the evil deed committed against Osiris. The list of tortures is very limited when compared with other sources. Nonetheless, they comprise body mutilations (removal of the heart⁴⁶, cutting of the head, turning of the limbs), burning by fire of both physical body and ba, destruction of the ba, as well as the execration of the name. As for the name, to assure the annihilation of its bearer, it had to be eradicated. For instance:

The Revelations of the Mysteries of the Four Balls

[26,5] *ntk iw irw ḏd iw p3 ḥr-n-srīw
ḥbt rn-f*

You are (the enemy) to whom the face of
Aries said: "your name is execrated".

⁴¹ The first edition is given by Goyon, 1975a and the text is also found in Goyon, 1999, p. 63-73.

⁴² The text occupies columns 1-3. The papyrus dates back to the end of the Graeco-Roman Period and comes from Thebes. It belonged to a Theban priest called *ns-p3-ntr-r*.

⁴³ The manuscript consists of a collection of magical formulae for the protection of the king against snakes and reptiles. Part of the papyrus is dedicated to a ritual with a different title, namely "another formula for closing the mouth of every snake" (*ky r3 n ḥtm r3 n ḏdf.t nb*).

⁴⁴ These papyri contain magical spells against scorpions and snakes and have been dated to the XX Dynasty on the basis of paleographical analysis (Chassinat, 1893, p. 10).

⁴⁵ Davies, 1953, p. 20, pl. 20 and 75 (photograph of the north wall).

⁴⁶ Cf. also the Abydos texts in which the seven uraei of Atum are demanded to seize and steal the hearts of Seth and of his following (Schott, 1929, p. 55, lines 20-21):

*it-tn ib.w ḥ(3)k-tn ḥ3.tiw
n stš pfy hsw hn sm3y.w-f*

Take the *ib*-hearts and steal (literally "capture") the *ḥ3.ti*-hearts
of this miserable Seth and his following

r ʿ ḥw-f tp-k ḥtm-f b3-k

nn ḥn-k [26,6] iw m33 ntr- ʿ⁴⁹

Ra⁴⁷ will strike your head⁴⁸ and will annihilate your ba.

You shall not approach to see the Great God⁵⁰.

*[28,2] ḥsk-tn tp-f šhtm-tn b3-f
dī-tn iw-f-f ks.w-f b3-f ḥr ḥ.t*

*nn dī-tn ḥn -f r bw nb ntīw [28,3] wsīr
īm.w*

Cut off his head! Destroy his ba!

Throw his flesh, his bones and his ba in the flame!

Do not let him approach any place in which Osiris is⁵¹.

As a result of such tortures, Seth is told that his ba will not exist anymore and that his corpse will not move. Along with the conception of death and afterlife discussed in the first chapter of this paper, the impossibility for the ba to monetarily leave the corpse, in order to partake the offerings and perform physical functions in behalf of the deceased, and to reunite with resulted in the denial of the individual's existence after the physical death. This corresponds to what the Egyptian labelled "second death", i.e. a definitive and eternal death. Seth, as the text explains, is condemned to suffer this kind of death, the most terrible of the faiths an ancient Egyptian could ever meet. This aspect is stressed in column 31,6 in which the god is depicted as a dead individual. The reciter of the spell menaces him, saying: "You shall not see (*m33*), you shall not eat (*sdm*), you shall not move (*šm*), you shall not grasp (*ḥf*)⁵²". All of this is in clear opposition to the ceremony of the Opening of the Mouth, which was performed on the mummy during the burial rites with the aim of giving all of his senses back to the deceased and granting him his afterlife. Thus, Seth is denied the continuance of existence in the afterlife.

Nevertheless, the destruction of the physical body, especially by means of fire, along with the annihilation of ba, name, and all of his manifestations leads to the same result. In this regard, threatening to burn his body completely, leaving only ashes behind, is equally scaring. Moreover, the Abydos texts also add that Seth will not even be able to find the ashes. This affirmation stresses even more the idea of his total destruction, symbolized by the burning of the figurine⁵³.

⁴⁷ Only in pMMA 35.9.21.

⁴⁸ pBrooklyn 47.218.138 has also "he will beat your joints" (XII, 12).

⁴⁹ Transcription after Goyon, 1975a, p. 357.

⁵⁰ Variations of lines 2 and 3 of this passage occur more than once throughout the ritual.

⁵¹ Transcription after Goyon, 1975a, p. 373.

⁵² Cf. Goyon, 1975a, p. 395.

⁵³ Schott, 1929, p. 51:

[29,6] <i>h3-k stš šhr tw-k n3 hr(.i)w-p.t ntr.w</i> <i>m p.t ıry-sn n.t- 's ım-k</i>	Go back, Seth! They who are above the sky overthrow you, the gods who are in the sky perform their ritual on you.
<i>di-n ıwf-k ks.w-k b3-k hr h.t pr</i> [29,7] <i>m wps.t</i>	They throw tour flesh, your bones, your ba in the flame which comes forth from Wepeset.
<i>wnmy.t wnm-s h 'w-k ıwf-k rkḥ-s ks.w-k m ssf</i>	The Devourer (flame) devours your limbs, your flesh. She burns your bones to ashes ⁵⁴ .

In column 30,3⁵⁵ the text states that Ra will cut off (*š'd*) each one of the manifestations (*hpr.w-k nb<.t>*) of Seth, but does not specify which ones they are. The line immediately following adds that all his forms (*kd nb<.t>*) and all his names will be shaped daily as the image of an enemy (*ts.tıw*), namely one of those figurines which were to be destroyed during execration rituals with the purpose of defeating one's opponent.

The downfall of Seth, aim of the ritual, is euphemistically referred to as a diversion. The praise to recite over the four balls of clay describes them as the balls “which provide protection for Osiris to turn away (*m3t*) Seth and his confederates from every place in which Osiris Wenennefer, justified, is⁵⁶”. Similarly, a refrain occurring below demands the gods to “ward off (*m3t*) Seth and his confederates from every place in which Osiris Foremost of the Westerners, Osiris Wenennefer, justified, is⁵⁷”. In a further passage (cols. 30,6-7 and 30,11-12) the gods of the south and those of the north are said to overthrow (*šhr*) him. Yet, at the same time, the composition denotes the defeat of Seth with explicit terms. We find an example in column 30,5 where a passage almost entirely written in red ink reads:

snmy-t ıwf-f 'm-t ks.w-f
nn gm-tw ssfy m d.t-f

You consume flesh, you devour (i.e. burn) his bones,
and you will not find the ashes of your body

⁵⁴ Col. 29, 6-7; Goyon, 1975a, p. 381.

⁵⁵ Goyon, 1975a, p. 385.

⁵⁶ Col. 27,12-13; Goyon, 1975a, p. 370-371.

⁵⁷ Cols. 28,15 and 29,2-3; Goyon, 1975a, p. 378-379.

[30,5] *stš 3k hn' sm3y.w-f hn' rn-f kd-f*

iw stš m-Hr-ib h.t

*iw wsir pr m m3'-hrw mī r*⁵⁸

Seth has perished along with his confederates, with his name and his form (since) Seth is in the middle of the fire (and) Osiris comes forth justified, like Ra.

In his study, Zandee understands the verb *3k*, which he translates “to be destroyed”, as a term describing death as a ceasing to exist⁵⁹. This is particularly true in our example, because, as the passage clearly explains, Seth has been put in a fire which, for its consuming nature, will completely annihilate him. So, in this case, not only is Seth said to have been killed, but he also is condemned to suffer “second death”.

A passage from pLouvre 3239 employs explicit terms, too. The concerned lines deal with the incapacitation of Seth, a theme found also in pMMA 35.9.21. Next to *sh̄tm* (“to destroy”), the verbs *sm3* (“to slay”, “to kill”) and *mwt* (“to die”) also occur. The text reads:

pLouvre 3239

*hw-w*⁶⁰ *tp-k*

wh3-w t3s.w-k

sh̄tm-w b3-k m s.t-k nb.t

šri-w ir(.t)-k

h̄tm-w r3-k

sm3-w tw-k

mwt-k m s.t b3b3-k

*nn hn-k r m33 ntr' 3*⁶¹

They shall strike your head,
they shall break your vertebrae,
they shall destroy your ba in all of your places.
They shall obstruct your eye,
they shall close your mouth.
They shall slay you
and you shall die in the place of your cavern.
You shall not approach to see the Great God.

Another important precondition to allow the deceased to live his afterlife was the remembrance of him among the living, both by means of the presentation of funerary offerings and of the pronunciation of his name. In the *Songs of Isis and Nephthys* (from pBremner-Rhind) line 11,10 reads that Seth shall not be remembered (*tm sh̄3*)⁶². Such a

⁵⁸ Transcription after Goyon, 1975a, p. 385.

⁵⁹ Zandee, 1960, p. 45.

⁶⁰ Suffix pronoun, 3rd person plural; Wb 1, 243.12-14.

⁶¹ Transcription after Chassinat, 1893, p. 14-15.

⁶² Faulkner, 1933, p. 20; Faulkner, 1936, p. 128.

brief but direct statement exactly corresponds to condemning the god to eternal destruction, similarly the statement that he “shall not be” (*nn wnn*) recorded in 5,17⁶³.

However, just like Apophis in his form of turtle, Seth’s death is referred even more explicitly when his name is not directly pronounced. A line from the *Songs of Isis and Nephthys* employs his epithet of Tebeh to openly explain that the god is actually dead by means of the stative form of the verb *hpi*. This term has proven to be an equivalent of *mwt* and is referred to as something hated by men, who obviously do not want to die eternally⁶⁴. Besides, to underline the violent execution performed on him, slaughter is also mentioned and the determinative of the Sethian animal is mutilated by a knife cutting through his tale.

The Songs of Isis and Nephthys

[2,17] *tbh hp(.y) s*⁶⁵ *wd* ‘*d.t*⁶⁶

Tebeh is dead in slaughter(?)⁶⁷

6.4. The symbolical killing of Seth

Next to wax and wooden figurines embodying Seth and to drawings on papyrus used in execrations rituals, also other symbolical representation of his slaughter and assassination existed in ancient Egypt. During the festivals of the Graeco-Roman Period which used to be held in Busiris and Lycopolis, cakes bearing the stamp of a bound donkey were baked and likely destroyed, perhaps even by having the spectators eating them. Creatures⁶⁸ were also symbolically sacrificed in temples. The donkey was considered to be a Sethian animal and, by means of this ritual, the creature was rendered harmless and defeated. Furthermore, in Ptolemaic Period hieroglyphic system, the sign of the donkey was represented as killed by a knife in his head or back⁶⁹. As a matter of fact, during the I millennium BC the Seth animal disappeared from art and writing in

⁶³ Faulkner, 1933, p. 10.

⁶⁴ On *hpi* see Zandee, 1960, p. 54.

⁶⁵ A corruption of *m*.

⁶⁶ As Faulkner notes, the writing of the determinative is apparently due to confusion of ‘*d*’ meaning “fat” with its homophone ‘*d*’ “slaughter”; cf. Faulkner, 1933, p. 5, note b.

⁶⁷ Transcription based on Faulkner, 1933, p. 5.

⁶⁸ Seth was associated with various animals: fish (*lepidotus*, *phragus*, *oxyrhyncus*), crocodile, hippopotamus, oryx, snake, pig. On this see, Hopfner, 1914, p. 198 (register) and related pages.

⁶⁹ Cf. Daumas, 1988, p. 213-215.

order to be commonly represented in such harmless ways⁷⁰. In a passage from the 6th hour of the *Book of the Day* from the tomb of Ramose (TT 132) the Sethian animal is even depicted with two knives in his back and with his head cut off⁷¹. This is almost surprising considering the role of Seth as protector of the solar bark against Apophis in the books of the Netherworld. However, bearing in mind the magical power that the ancient Egyptians accredited to the written word and to images, this kind of representation would result not only in the god's symbolical defeat but also in his concrete slaying and death.

Similarly to the above mentioned festivals, in Edfu, after performing the victory of Horus over Seth and after hunting and killing crocodiles⁷², it was custom to eat their meat⁷³. Indeed, the crocodile was another symbol of the evil god⁷⁴. A further example is the Festival of the Kites, during which Seth was ritually killed in order to protect and purify the temple in conjunction with the recitation of a "great rite of protection"⁷⁵.

The royal hippopotamus hunt, commemorating the victory of Horus over Seth, culminated with the death of the animal, which was indeed a Sethian symbol. This practice is attested already in the I Dynasty and its tradition lasted until the end of the Ptolemaic Period⁷⁶, when representations of this ritual event were carved on the walls of the Edfu temple. The myth of Horus at Edfu⁷⁷ is inscribed on the inner faces of the east and west enclosure walls. It actually consists of five texts. The third composition – named by Egyptologists Myth C – is the one about the triumph of Horus over his enemies and is likely the transcript of the drama annually performed at the festival of Horus⁷⁸. It consisted of a prologue⁷⁹, three acts divided into scenes⁸⁰, and an epilogue⁸¹. The text was possibly based on a late New Kingdom recension, written on papyrus rolls

⁷⁰ Te Velde, 1985-1986, p. 67.

⁷¹ Soukiassian, 1981, p. 62.

⁷² On the slaying of the crocodile at Edfu and Dendera see Wilson, 1997.

⁷³ Frankfurter, 1998, p. 54.

⁷⁴ Several of Seth's bynames are determined by the sign of the crocodile. On this, see te Velde, 1967, p. 150, note 1. Besides, according to ancient Egyptian mythology, Seth was transformed in a crocodile by Geb after the murder of Osiris.

⁷⁵ Cf. Faulkner, 1963, p. 127-129.

⁷⁶ This practice is the result of a predynastic tradition started by the emerging elite and later become privilege of the king. On the origin of such ritual custom see Roche, 2014.

⁷⁷ Griffiths (1958) gives an historical-political interpretation of the myth and, according to him, it would represent the expulsion of the Hyksos.

⁷⁸ Fairman, 1935, p. 26. For this festival and all related texts see Alliot, 1979b, p. 677-819.

⁷⁹ Blackman, Fairman, 1943, p. 2-6.

⁸⁰ Blackman, Fairman, 1943, p. 6-17 (acts I and II); 1944, p. 5-15 (acts II and III).

⁸¹ Blackman, Fairman, 1944, p. 15. The epilogue has no accompanying relief to the text.

which were preserved in the temple-library⁸². The purpose of the representation obviously was to commemorate the Horus's victory over Seth, his coronation as king of Upper and Lower Egypt, the dismemberment of his foes, and his justification before the divine tribunal in the Broad Hall. The text is divided into section by eleven reliefs exemplifying it⁸³. Each of them has a horizontal label, captions on the figures, and a block of text. It is indeed in those relief that the hunt to the hippopotamus as Sethian animal is shown. Eight of them portray Horus in a boat armed with a harpoon and accompanied by various gods or by the king (figure 11), whereas the remaining one represents the butchering of Seth (figure 12) as an interlude. The dismemberment of the Sethian animal, staged almost in conclusion of the drama, was executed on the 21st day of the second month of Peret⁸⁴, which the Greeks named Mechir. Act III is made up of three scenes: the first two depicting two versions of the slaughtering of Seth, and the third one illustrating the distribution of his body part in the form of hippopotamus cake to the gods.

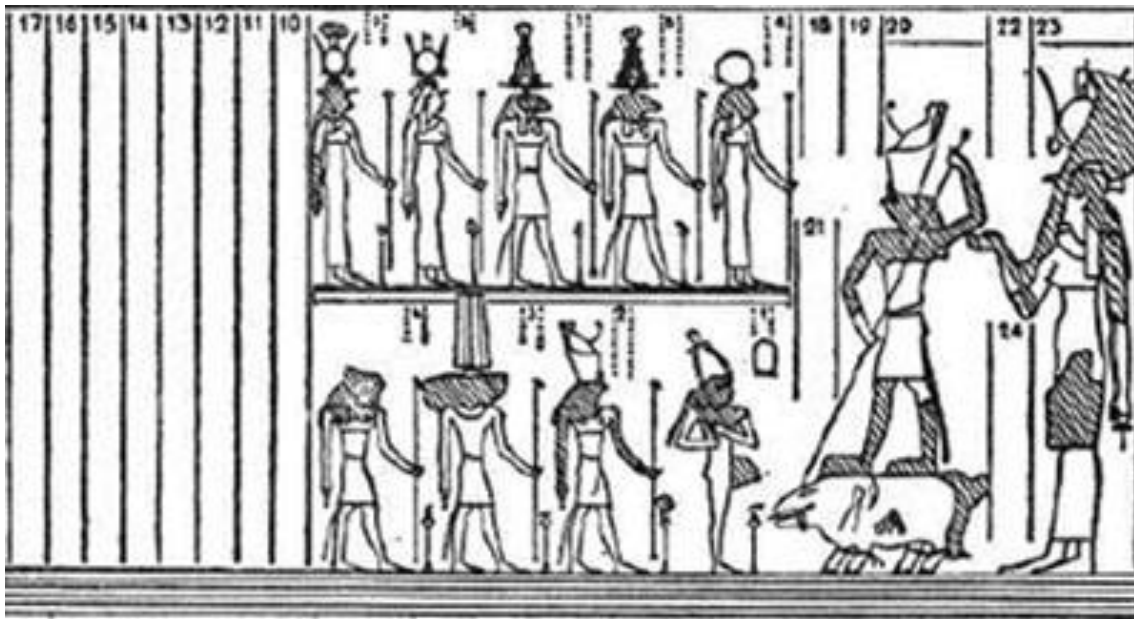


Figure 11. Relief from the west wall of the inner face of the enclosing wall of the Edfu temple. It consists in the first scene of act III and shows Horus harpooning Seth in the form of hippopotamus. Source: Chassinat, 1960, pl. CXLVI.

⁸² Blackman, Fairman, 1942, p. 33-34.

⁸³ Blackman, Fairman, 1942, p. 32-33.

⁸⁴ Chassinat, 1931, p. 88, line 2.



Figure 12. Relief from the west wall of the inner face of the enclosing wall of the Edfu temple. It consists in the interlude of act III and shows the dismemberment of Seth in form of hippopotamus. Source: Chassinat, 1960, pl. CXLVI.

Of course, both the dramatic representation and its illustration in temple reliefs had the same function as the figurines used in execration rituals. Besides, as part of the celebration, priests also used to eat hippopotamus-shaped bread – as the one appearing in act III scene III – to symbolize the complete non-existence of Seth⁸⁵. Nevertheless, even in this case, passages from the inscriptions use the verb *hr* to describe Seth's defeat. Yet, the line almost immediately following, reporting a speech by Isis, mentions annihilation for eternity as well. The concerned passage is found in act III scene III, the concluding one of the act:

Edfu VI, 89, 6-7

hr m ph.ty-f sm3-n-f t3.wy
stš hr(.w) m h3b
bik.t (ii).ti r pr-hr

dd-s n s3-s hr
hft.iw(-k) hr(.w) ski r nhh

Horus with his strength united the Two Lands⁸⁶
 and Seth has fallen in the form of hippopotamus.
 The falcon (i.e. Isis) has come to the House of
 Horus (i.e. Edfu).
 She said to her son Horus:
 “(your) enemies have fallen and are annihilated for
 eternity”.

⁸⁵ Cf. Chassinat, 1931, p. 88, lines 1-2; Kurth, 2014, p. 154.

⁸⁶ Chassinat, 1931, p. 88, 18; Cf. Kurth, 2014, p. 152, Alliot, 1979b, p. 785 (line 6 only).

Also from early times, dates back the ritual slaughtering of the red ox embodying Seth, demonstrating that the condemnation to death of gods in the form of animals was a long-standing tradition in the ancient Egyptian culture.

The later and much more numerous pieces of evidence negatively dealing with Seth, certainly find their reason in the god's turning from veneration to demonization. This event occurred about the transition between the XXV and XXVI Dynasties after that Seth's cult had started to decline at the beginning of the first millennium BC⁸⁷.

6.5. Summary and cross references

Despite some sources actually claimed that Seth was immortal (PT 570), such affirmation has proven to be unfounded. It indicates instead a long life which the king expected to live in his turn. As other gods, Seth is listed in the Royal Canon of Turin which actually ascribes to him a limited amount of years of reign. Yet, the papyrus does not specify if the god died at the end of two hundred years attributed to him or if he simply left the throne to a successor. Seth is also one of the gods euphemistically said to go to his ka in various spells from the *Pyramid* and *Coffin Texts*. Yet, a violent death, not in connection with the above quoted instances, is the one which characterizes him.

Mentions of the violent death of Seth appear in the record along with Osiris's. In spells from the *Pyramid Texts* Horus is said of massacring Seth in the same way in which his uncle has murdered his father Osiris. The verbs employed denote violence, but some of them explicitly mean "to kill". By means of this comparison both the death of Seth and that of Osiris are referred to at the same time and, even though the names of both of them are silenced, their identity is easily deducible. This way of referring to Seth's death lasts up the *Coffin Texts*, whereas in the *Book of the Dead* (BD 173) it only occurs once. In this case the verbs employed are different and those referred to Seth has a more violent connotation. Because of this comparison "second death" is not alluded to since Osiris is living his eternal afterlife in the reign of the dead and menaces of total destruction would have affected this situation.

The "second death" of Seth is the culminating moment of execration rituals. As a matter of fact, this kind of text from the Late and Ptolemaic Periods deals with physical tortures, burning, destruction of the ba, and execration of the name.

⁸⁷ Soukiassian, 1981, p. 62.

Euphemistic and more explicit terms coexist next to each other in such documents. As for the first category, they comprise the stative form of the verb *hr* (“to fall”) and the verb *hsf* (“to repel”). Both of them are also found in texts concerning the defeat of Apophis. An additional euphemism is the image of Seth lying on his side (*Ritual for causing the downfall of Seth and his followers*) which has been borrowed from the typical description of Osiris, recurrent especially in the *Pyramid Texts* and with a few more attestation in the *Coffin Texts*. In regard to a more explicit violence, the “second death” of Seth was also symbolically represented. Just like in the case of Apophis, a first means to represent it was the shaping of wax and wooden figurines which were ritually to be destroyed along with drawings sketched on new sheets of papyrus. A second means was the mutilation of the sign by which Seth’s name was written. Besides, reliefs depicting Seth’s butchering in the form of hippopotamus are engraved on the walls of the Edfu Temple. There, a drama was also performed and it comprised the eating of hippopotamus-shaped loaves to symbolized, once again, Seth’s total annihilation. However, the hippopotamus hunt and its slaughtering belong to an older tradition which dates back to the I Dynasty. Similarly, in spells from the *Pyramid Texts* the ritual consumption of Seth’s bodily parts offered to Osiris is mentioned. In this instance Seth’s death assumes a ritual and sacrificial character.

Nonetheless, just like Apophis, Seth was never actually killed. As a matter of fact, he was the representative of chaos and evil forces – a characteristic which he had shared with the evil divine serpent – and consequently Seth could not be eradicated since his existence was necessary to maintain the cosmic balance.

CHAPTER 7

SHU AND GEB¹

Next to Osiris, other gods of the Heliopolitan Ennead were taught to have suffered death. As a matter of fact, according to certain myths, Shu and Geb, forefathers of Osiris, experienced this last phase of the mortal life. The tradition dealing with this issue is actually much later than that concerning the Osirian myth, which on the contrary is already well established by the time of the *Pyramid Texts*. The account of the death of Shu only occurs on a Late Period monument, the so-called naos of Ismailia, once dated to the Ptolemaic Period but whose composition has now been ascribed to the XXX Dynasty². According to this mythological account, possibly the metaphor of the political disputes taking place the end of the Pharaonic Period, the god Shu is killed by his son Geb in order to take possession of the throne of Egypt.

The parallel tradition of the murder of Geb is likely to be taught in connection with the account inscribed on the naos of Ismailia. As a matter of fact, a passage from the monument may refer to the possible rape of Tefnut committed by Geb, who, in the Florence Manual and in pSalt 825, is said to be killed because of sleeping with Tefnut and committing a crime against his father, respectively. Yet, despite the fact that the two accounts possibly draw this last element from the same tradition, the ways and meaning of these two divine deaths are different from each other. Nevertheless, both are referred to in inoffensive or indirectly, even though the euphemism employed change from a source to another.

¹ Recent monographies on Shu and Geb are almost lacking, yet some studies on specific matters have been carried out by scholars. As for the latter, his figure and role has been investigated in the context of the *Pyramid Texts* and *Coffin Texts* by Miosi (1989-1990 and 2002 respectively) as well as in temple inscriptions of the Graeco-Roman Period by Bedier (1995). In regard to Shu, the monograph by De Buck (1947), in which he explores the god's figure in particular getting data from the Coffin Texts, must be mentioned. A general introduction on Geb and Shu is also found in LÄ (te Velde, 1977, cols. 427-429 and 1984, cols 735-737, respectively).

² For a brief introduction of the monument see p. 25. For its datation and political reading see p. 223-224 for its datation.

7.1. The death by violence of Shu

According to the mythological account inscribed on the naos of Ismailia, the enthronement of Geb is said to occur after his father's departure to heaven, a statement repeated twice. Divine death is not a new element in the composition: as usual, the reign of Shu is indeed preceded by that of Ra, in his turn said to have died at the very beginning of the text, having become true of voice (*m3 ' hrw*)³.

The departure of Shu, following that of his predecessor, is more allusive when compared with that of Ra-Harakhty, which is also referred to indirectly and not in connection with any violence that he might have suffered. The idea of Shu leaving the earth for heaven is most likely a euphemism for his death. Yet, it is still possible to intend such expression literally, simply meaning that he withdrew to the sky in order to leave his earthly domain to his son without necessarily dying – similarly to what Ra does after the rebellion of mankind in the *Book of the Heavenly Cow*. Nonetheless, death as ascension to heaven is a typical means to refer to the passing away of the deceased king in the *Pyramid Texts*. Examples of this are countless but PT 305 exemplifies this concept, setting up gods (i.e. kings) who fly up against men who bury themselves⁴. This actually suggests the first option, namely that of a proper decease. In this regard, passages from the naos read:

Naos of Ismailia

hry hm n šw r p.t hn ' šms.w-f

The majesty of Shu flew to heaven⁵ with his following.

tfn.t m s.t h ' -s m inb.w hq⁶

Tefnut was in the place of her enthronement in Memphis.

šw pw hr-f r p.t

Shu flew to the sky.

iw nn wnn pr.t m hnw hr ' h ' .y n h(r)w 9

There was no exit from the palace for a time of nine days.

ir h[rw 9] pn m nšn d ' .w pw nn m33 hr (s)n.nw-f in rm(t) ntr.w

During these [nine days] of rage there was a tempest so that men and gods could not see

³ See p. 158-159.

⁴ [§459a] *dh r-sn rmt pzy r-sn ntr.w*. "People hide (= bury) themselves (whereas) the gods fly up".

⁵ *hri* typically means "to fly to heaven" and is a characteristic verb of the Late and Graeco-Roman Periods; cf. Wb 3, 146.13.

⁶ Griffith, 1890, pl. XXV, line 4; Goyon, 1936, p.

<p><i>pr-n hm n gb m h' hr s.t it-f šw sn-t3 n-f</i> <i>ī[n iml.w hn]w nb</i></p> <p><i>ir m-ht hrw 75 wd3 pw ir-n gb r t3h.t</i> <i>hr ...⁷-n šw r p.t⁸</i></p>	<p>the face of his fellow. The majesty of Geb appeared on the throne of his father Shu and earth was kissed for him by everyone of the palace. After 75 days, Geb went to the Delta and Shu flew to the sky⁹.</p>
--	---

In opposition to the natural death of Ra, Shu's departure to heaven might be a violent one. The passage of the text immediately preceding the one mentioning Shu's departure to heaven is unhappily full of lacunae and the edges of the entire naos are scraped. This makes the context obscure and the real meaning doubtful. Griffith suggested that Shu suffered of some kind of disease, affecting his eyes in particular¹⁰. This interpretation is now rejected, and the fragmentary passage is reconstructed as a description of Shu's attitude towards the enemies that he defeated¹¹.

<p>[...] <i>w t3-[n]-f t3 dr-f</i> <i>iw nn 'h'-tw [...] r hft-hr-f</i> <i>nn ky ntr m r3 n mš'-f</i> [...]¹² <i>.w-f nšn hr šhm ir.ty¹³</i></p>	<p>[...] he seized the whole land. One could not stand [...] before him, no other god was in the mouth of his army. His [...] and fury took hold of eyes¹⁴.</p>
---	---

⁷ A small space has been left blank between *hr* and the determinative of the flying goose.

⁸ Goyon, 1936, p. 14.

⁹ The translation of the following part is debated. Goyon and Bresciani intend *hr-tp t3* as part of this sentence, in the sense that Shu flies to heaven, passing above the earth. They translate, respectively: "Chou volait, au ciel, par dessus la terre, au devant de son fils aîné à travers les montagnes [de l'Orient]. Il (Geb) n'alla pas à On avec comme compagnons des voleurs de sceptre" (Goyon, 1936, p. 32); "Sciu volava nel cielo sopra la terra, davanti al suo figlio maggiore, attraverso le montagne [dell'Oriente]. (Gheb) non andò a Eliopoli in compagnia dei ladri di scettri" (Bresciani, 1969, p. 458). On the contrary, Schneider connects *hr-tp t3* with the following sentence and translates it "Anführer des Landes" – as Griffith also did before him – citing Wb 3, 140.7, according to which the expression is a designation of the king. Hence, Schneider translates: "Der Anführer des Landes was (noch) vor seinem (Schus) ältesten Sohn auf den Bergen [...], damit er nicht nacht Heliopolis würde gehen können mit den Genossen als einer, der das Zepter ergreift" (1998, p. 220). He also gives the preposition *r-h3t* chronological shade of meaning, rather than a local one. However, the reason why Geb does not go to Heliopolis to symbolically legitimate his power is not clear.

¹⁰ He integrates as follows: "Now it came to pass that the majesty of Shu obtained the whole land, none could stand before him, no other god was in the mouth of his soldiers(?) [but sickness came upon him(?)] ... confusion sized his eyes(?)" (1890, p. 72).

¹¹ Goyon already interpreted the text in this way: "furieux de face au regard impérieux" (1936, p. 30); Verhoeven, suggests multiple translation for *nšn*, among which also "disease": "Wut/Krankheit/Unheil bemächtigte sich der beiden Augen" (1991, p. 321). Schneider integrates the whole passage: "Da [schlug] die Macht (?) des Chu [sie zurück], damit er das ganze Land in Besitz nehme, so daß man sich nicht mehr gegen ihn würde erheben können end es keinen anderen Gott im Mund seiner Armee gebe. [Er kämpfte? erblickte Rebellen?] mit zornigem Gesicht und machvollen Augen" (1998, p. 216).

¹² The end of the first line is badly damaged. Cf. Griffith, 1890, pl. XXV.

¹³ Transcription based on the edition by Goyon, 1936, p. 13.

¹⁴ Alternatively: "furieux de face au regard impérieux" (Goyon, 1936, p. 30), "mit wütendem Gesicht und machtvollen Augen" (Verhoeven, 1991, p. 321).

The attempted coup of Geb indeed results in the withdrawal of Shu and in the conquest of the throne. Shu's departing to the sky is consequently the metaphor of his violent death. The text gives no hints as to how it happened and the narration immediately switches to two new episodes, namely that of the presumed rape of Tefnut¹⁵ and of the nine days of insurrection preceding Geb's enthronement. The repetition of Shu's departure to heaven after 75 days might not be accidental. As Schneider¹⁶ stresses out, they are apparently enough to perform the embalming process, which is traditionally considered to require 70 days. Hence, the new mention of Shu's departure to heaven should refer to his burial, and not to his death, as in the previous instances, in which his assassination was actually intended. However, no mention of this event is found throughout the text and, in the same way, the circumstances of Shu's presumably violent death are silenced. If this speculative interpretation is correct, then Osiris's corpse would not actually be the only divine corpse to have ever been embalmed after a violent death, nor the first one. Obviously, this tradition dates back to a much later time than that of the origin of the myth of Osiris and the two are absolutely not in connection. Osiris is the symbol of body restoration and rebirth *par excellence* and no one here claims that Shu was regarded as the prototype of the first mummy. Nevertheless, from the point of view of the chronological succession of divine kings on the throne of Egypt, Shu actually comes first. In practice, in this case a well-established tradition, namely that of embalming, has been inserted from the earthly sphere in the legend of the succession of Shu and Geb. On the contrary, in the instance of the Osirian myth, the mythological element of embalming is transferred from the divine sphere to the earthly one, being Osiris's mummy the legendary antecedent of the practice of embalming as well as its ideological starting point. However, the meaning of the two myths is completely different and the account engraved on the naos of Ismailia has actually a political background, not a religious one.

In his political reading of the myth, Schneider¹⁷ identifies Shu with Hakor and Geb with Nectanebo I, understanding the tempest's description as a metaphor for the struggle for the succession to the throne that opposed Nephertites II and Nectanebo I, both of them grandsons of Nephertites I. After the death of his father Hakor, Nephertites

¹⁵ This interpretation, traditionally accepted, has been recently questioned. Cf. Verhoeven, 1991 and Schneider, 1998, p. 216-219. On the contrary, for other ancient Egyptian compositions presumably demonstrating the rape of Tefnut see Von Lieven, 2015, p. 190-196.

¹⁶ 1998, p. 219.

¹⁷ 1998, p. 236-240 in particular.

II ruled over Egypt for a few months before being deposed by his rival Nectanebo I, founder of the XXX Dynasty. If such identification were correct, we would have to consider Shu's death from a different point of view. We do not know much about the rulers of the XXIX Dynasty, but evidence from this period show short-term reigns and king's depositions¹⁸. The *Demotic Chronicle* (Papyrus Bibliothèque Nationale 215) reads that Hakor was dismissed (*h3* ') because he "forsook the law and did not care for his brothers" after "accomplishing his time of reign" being beneficent towards the temples¹⁹. It seems therefore that Hakor was overthrown by Psammuthis but then managed to regain the throne, assuming the epithet *wḥm ḥ* '. When he lost the power again, his son Nephertites II succeeded him²⁰. The mythological death of Shu in the account of the Naos would therefore be the representation of this dynastic struggle and definitely a death by violence.

As for the posthumous life of Shu, the text does not give any further information. Nevertheless, the adoption of that particular euphemism makes us speculate on the reason of its choice. It might simply have been employed as a characteristic verb of the Late and Graeco-Roman Periods and thus having no particular meaning except of the softened "to die". On the other hand, the term might have been chosen in connection with a celestial hereafter, like the one awaiting the king in the funerary traditions of the Old Kingdom and of the *Pyramid Texts*.

7.2. The death by condemnation of Geb

The condemnation to death of evil and malevolent gods as a punishment for their wrong doing is a well-known and explicit example of divine death. Models of this are obviously Apophis – Ra's main enemy – and Seth – violently punished for what he has done to his brother Osiris. Nevertheless, ancient Egyptian literature offers a further

¹⁸ Shaw, 2000, p. 377.

¹⁹ IV, 9-10; Spiegelberg, 1914, p. 11 for transliteration and p. 18 for the German translation.

²⁰ One of the main problems on this matter of succession is the place of Psammuthis in the dynasty: as a matter of fact, whereas Manetho places him after Hakor, the *Demotic Chronicle* does the direct opposite thing, placing him before Hakor. This second instance would also be supported by the evidence of the Karnak chapel. The epithet *wḥm ḥ* ' that follows the name of Hakor – sometimes even inscribed inside the cartouche – and which appeared in the record in the third year of his reign suggests his enthronement and a subsequent resumption of power at the end of his second or third year. On this issue and especially on the restoration of Hakor see the study by Ray, 1986. For a brief overview on the issue of succession of the concerned rulers see Felber (2002, p. 102-103), who also gives a new German translation of the *Demotic Chronicle*.

example. It comes from a later tradition, ideally associated with the above referred mythological account recorded on the Naos of Ismailia. It deals with the rebellion of Geb against his father Shu and the likely violent assassination of Shu by the hands of his son and successor to the throne. The Mythological Manual Florence PSI inv. I 72²¹, offers clear evidence in this sense. The papyrus, written in hieratic script and coming from Tebtynis has been dated on the basis of paleographical analysis to the II century AD, making of the source under analysis the most recent text in our study. The papyrus, similarly to the Late Period pJumilhac and pBrooklyn 47.218.84, consists of a collection of myths and etiological paronomasia Upper Egyptian nomes. However, only those of nomes VII-XVII are preserved, being the first part of the papyrus (nomes I-VI) completely missing²². The myth dealing with Geb's condemnation is part of the section dedicated to nome XV (4,11-7,8) and to its capital Hermopolis in particular. The main deities of this section are the newly-born solar god in the form of a child, along with Thoth and his spouse *nḥm.t-ʿw3.y*, to be identified with Shu and Tefnut, respectively²³. In the concerned passage (4,11-5,7), Geb is punished for having committed a crime against his father. The lines introducing the event read: "This is the living place of the one who punished the son who perpetrated a crime against his father in the slaughtering place of Hermopolis. Look, he settled down with his mother Tefnut and thus they sinned against his father Shu²⁴". In the composition Geb is considered a negative being and consequently his name is written in red ink, similarly to those of Seth and Apophis as occurring in various instances. Then, after referring to a piece of cloth (*sṯ3.t*) given to Shu as a protection and to his plunging in a well in Heliopolis in order to rejuvenate for lifting the sky over his son Geb, the text deals with Geb's punishment. The disjunction of the sky from the earth appears here as part of the chastisement of Geb, who is consequently separated from his spouse Nut²⁵. Nevertheless, a physical and violent punishment follows, resulting in the killing of Geb. As expected, his murder is referred to euphemistically, namely stating that he has been thrown on his side, which is the typical terminology used to describe the assassination of Osiris. The death of Geb is clearly said to be the appropriate conclusion of the judgement, thus resulting in a death

²¹ An edition of the papyrus has been published, along with an Italian translation, brief commentary and plates by Osing, Rosati, 1998. Lately a transliteration, English translation and commentary have been given by Jørgensen (2014) in his inedited Ph.D. thesis on Egyptian mythological manuals. Specifically, the myth of the rape of Tefnut is examined at p. 73-82 and transliterated and translated at p. 231-232.

²² Osing, Rosati, 1998, p. 129-131.

²³ The identification of *nḥm.t-ʿw3.y* with Tefnut is nowhere else known. Cf. Osing, Rosati, 1998, p. 154.

²⁴ Translation by Von Lieven, 2015, p. 192.

²⁵ Osing, Rosati, 1998, p. 161, note n.

by condemnation. In this sense, it ideally resembles the daily murder of Apophis, decreed by Ra, or that of Seth, similarly punished for a crime that he committed.

The Florence Manual

<p><i>ir wnw.t 3mm-m 'b3-s [x+4,17] [iry-s aḏw]</i> <i>m s3-wh3iw ḥsi-ḳd pw</i></p> <p><i>wpd m šhr-f rdi hr gs-f</i></p> <p>[x+4,18] <i>ḥft bnb nḥm- 'w3 m ḥmn.w</i> <i>nḥb.t- 'nw m dp</i></p>	<p>As for Unut who grasps her spear, she made a slaughter on the failing son²⁶, miserable of character, who was judged according to his nature and thrown²⁷ on his side because of sleeping²⁸ with Nehemet-awai²⁹ in Hermopolis and Nehbet-anet in Buto.</p>
--	--

The mythological manual describes the feast of the 19th day of I Akhet which used to take place in Hermopolis as the triumph of Shu over Geb for the rape of his mother (5,7-6,9)³⁰. At the opening of the celebration, a *bd3.t*-goose is sacrificed in the place of slaughtering to recall the event. Horus cuts the throat of the animal and offers its blood as food to Hathor, mistress of appearances (*nb.t-ḥ 'w*) and hand of the god (*ḏr.t ntr*)³¹. The goose is actually the graphic symbol of Geb, the hieroglyphic sign by means of which the god's mane is written, and consequently represents the god as a sacrificial victim. It actually corresponds to the ritual butchering of the hippopotamus as incarnation of Seth, punished for the crime committed against Osiris. So, in regard to Geb, next to the account of his death in literature, also a ritual and symbolic one is attested.

7.3. The death and resurrection of Geb

Nonetheless, The Florence Manual is not the only ancient Egyptian source referring to the death of Geb. A passage of pSalt 825 (British Museum EA10090 + EA10051) alludes to it and even goes further, dealing with the god's resuscitation

²⁶ *s3 wh*, spelled with the goose sign. On the contrary, *b3 wh* is an appellation Seth, literally meaning "he who fails at his time" (der Erfolglose), as appearing in Edfu VIII 7,4. On this epithet see LGG VI, p. 76.

²⁷ Literally "given".

²⁸ On the verb *bnbn* see Baines, 1970.

²⁹ The goddess has to be identified with Tefnut.

³⁰ Osing, Rosati, 1998, p. 171-178.

³¹ Osing, Rosati, 1998, p. 158.

(x+19,8 – x+19,10³²). The papyrus, consisting in a ritual manual for the renewal of Osiris figures entitled *The End of the Work*. It has been firstly dated to the second half of the I century BC by Derchain³³ but more recent paleographical studies by Verhoeven³⁴ attribute its composition to the XXVI Dynasty. Other scholars, more generally, ascribe it to the Ptolemaic Period³⁵. The main element of the ritual is a statuette of Osiris kept in a temple in Abydos, in the so called the “House of Life³⁶”. Apotropaic spells uttered by priest personifying Shu, Tefnut, Geb, and Nut against the enemies of Osiris are also part of the composition. In the first section, the papyrus refers to the death of Osiris, a topic which is actually a central element of the ritual. However, the text also deals with the revolt of Geb against his father. He is sentenced to death because of his rebellion against Shu, who then, feeling sorry for what he has done to his son, brings him back to life.

pSalt 825

šw m-ht ir sz-f sbi.w [x+19,9] r-f

wnn-f di.t ph.wy-k3.t r hh-f r nhm-f m- ‘f

[wnn-f] di.t hpr kn im-f

[wn].in šw hr <r>rm [x+19,10] m-ht hpr
kn im-f

wnn-f di.t ‘nh-f m km-n-3.t m t3w n r3-f r-
dbw sz-f wsir³⁷

Shu, after his son committed the hostility [x+19,9] against him,

put the spell “end of work” to his neck (as an amulet) to safeguard him(self) from him (i.e. Geb).

He made that an evil deed happened to him.

(But) Shu wept [x+19,10] after the evil deed happened to him (i.e. Geb)

(and so) he gave him immediately life by means of the breath of his mouth instead of his son Osiris.

The description of Geb’s condemnation to death is voluntarily vague and imprecise. The text never explains how the god is killed and neither reads that violence

³² Corresponding to 14,8-14,10 of Derchain’s edition (1965). The finding of the previously missing beginning (see Herbin, 1988) has resulted in the renumbering of the pages. The papyri have recently been republished by Fermat (2010), who basically combined the editions by Derchain and Herbin but gave no further contribution.

³³ 1965, p. 119-127.

³⁴ 2001, p. 280-289.

³⁵ Parkinson, 1999, p. 86, no. 12.

³⁶ On the subject see Gardiner, 1938.

³⁷ Transcription based on Feder in TLA (accessed 10/2016).

is performed on him. We are simply told that some offence³⁸ or suffering has happened to Geb. The seriousness of it is implied by the fact that Shu is weeping because of it. Nevertheless, no further detail is given. Moving on with the passage, we find something very interesting. This composition is indeed a unique evidence of divine death and actual resuscitation. The sequence of the events can be reconstructed also relying on the information given by the later Florence Manual. It actually sets Shu's triumph over Geb on the 9th day of I Akhet, namely on the feast of Thoth, being Shu identified with him throughout the composition. Consequently, Shu would start protecting himself on the 17th day, punish and kill his son on the 19th, and finally revive him on the 24th³⁹.

Contrary to Osiris, who in his turn suffered a violent death, and to Ra, whose rebirth was witnessed daily by the ancient Egyptians and therefore legitimate, Geb is killed but actually revived. This is exactly what we read in the passage where actually no background is given and which might possibly be fragmentary. A literary reading leads to the only conclusion that Geb is resuscitated in place of Osiris. The preposition *db3.w/db3* has indeed a disjunctive shade of meaning (instead of a thing or a person, to substitute someone⁴⁰) but can also mean “in exchange for” or “because of⁴¹”. According to the translation of *db3* “instead of⁴²”, Geb's revival seems to come at expense of Osiris. Nonetheless, a caption referring to Shu reads “your father Shu, who makes the sweat breath of life for your nose each day⁴³”.

A completely different interpretation is that of Derchain. Despite the fact that the hostilities between Geb and Shu are known from other sources, he is disinclined to identify Geb as the hostile character mentioned in the passage. He thinks that the rebel is actually Osiris, even though the fact has no counterpart. Indeed, as Derchain points out, Shu is designated as his father and Tefnut as his mother. Nevertheless, on the other hand, Geb and Nut are attributed the same role but, in the beginning of the composition, also Ra is called father of Osiris. Besides, the term *it* not only specifically means “father”, but also “forefather”⁴⁴. Derchain, regardless of all of this, intends the breath of

³⁸ For this translation of *kn* cf. FCD, p. 279.

³⁹ This sequence of events is reconstructed in Von Lieven, 2015, p. 200.

⁴⁰ Cf. Wb 5, 559.16-18.

⁴¹ Wb 5, 560.2. In this instance, translating “because of his son Osiris” offers us a different shade of meaning for the above quoted passage. It would mean actually that the pity which Shu feels for Geb depends somehow on Osiris, who is the son of Geb, to whom the suffix pronoun *-f* attached to *s3* refers.

⁴² Griffiths, 1967, p. 187. On the contrary, von Lieven (2015, p. 197) translates “in exchange for/because of his son Osiris” and underlines that the preposition “always means an exchange for something, a replacement or a payment”.

⁴³ Derchain, 1965, p. 145, pl. 24.

⁴⁴ Cf. FCD p. 32.

Shu as “destiné à son fils Osiris”, also inappropriate considering the meaning range of the preposition *r db3*. Consequently, according to his understanding, the episode would be interpreted as the resurrection of the god of the dead. This of course has no matching evidence and is completely in contrast with the nature of Osiris. Therefore this interpretation is categorically to be rejected.

The vivifying breath of life mentioned in reference to Geb might indicate the vigor conveyed to the ritual statuette of Osiris (*twt n hnt.y-îmn.tt*) that the text instruct to create (x+21,1-x+21,8). An element connecting the statuette with Geb is sand (*š'y*), which is both one of the materials used to shape the statuette and that of the ground of the burial chamber, the architectural element which is identified with Geb⁴⁵.

However, the resuscitation of Geb has no precedents in ancient Egyptian literature. As a matter of fact, this revival instance is different from the case of Apophis, who is also brutally murdered and even annihilated, but who comes to life again in order to be fought over again and thus maintain the cosmic balance. In the case of Geb, he is indeed resuscitated exclusively because his father, feeling guilty for the punishment inflicted on him, wanted him to. It would resemble more the instance of Horus the Child, bitten by a snake and healed by Thoth. But in this last example, evidence actually points to the fact that the child god was not truly dead but just appeared as if he were, suffering the effect of the venom⁴⁶.

The question rising at this point is why Geb had to be resuscitated, once forgiven by his father. As Von Lieven points out, this fact might hide a political moral, namely that, even though serious offences are committed, the royal family needs to be united in order to assure dynastic continuity⁴⁷. As a matter of fact, as she explains, if Geb were condemned to be permanently dead, just like Osiris, when his son had not yet conceived an heir, the divine succession would have ended once and for all. According to her, this interpretation would also explain why royal inscription so often associate the inheritance of kingship with Geb. Yet, this understanding is actually in conflict with the Osirian myth in which it is recognized that the god conceives a posthumous child with his sister and wife Isis. Nevertheless, this interpretation can be justified by underlying that different versions of one myth coexisted next to each other. This resulted in more

⁴⁵ x+11,7 identifies the parts of the burial chamber with various gods: the sides with Isis, Nephthys, Horus, and Thoth; the ceiling with Nut; the floor with Geb. For the orientation of the gods to the corners of the building complex cf. Derchain, 1965, p. 48-51.

⁴⁶ See p. 258-261.

⁴⁷ Von Lieven, 2015, p. 201.

neutral versions, being consequently much more recurrent, and in injurious ones, which, because of their nature, occurred sporadically and in mythological manuals only⁴⁸, as in the case under analysis.

7.4. Summary and cross references

The myth of the struggle between the two gods resulting in the death of Shu by the hand of Geb has most likely a political background. As a matter of fact, it has been interpreted as the mythological transposition of the actual fights taking place in the last period of pharaonic Egypt. Consequently the two gods would be the personifications of human earthly rules. The death of Shu (naos of Ismailia) is alluded to by means of the well-known euphemism of retiring to the sky, used in particular in association to ancestor gods venerated in the necropolis annexed to Ptolemaic Period temples (Edfu II, 51,8-11; Edfu VII, 118,9-14).

Another myth dealing with the two of them presents the opposite situation: in this case the victim suffering death is Geb, murdered because of a crime he committed against his father, namely the rape of his mother Tefnut. In this case violence is meant and the god is said to have been put on his side (Florence PSI inv. I 72). This is the same terminology used to refer to the murder of Osiris (*Pyramid Texts*). Also recalling the Osirian myth is the expression used in another version of such account (pSalt 825), in which Geb's condemnation to death is designated simply as an evil deed (*kn*) happening to him, just like Osiris's slaughtering is labelled *kn wr* or *kn ʒ* ("the great misfortune"). However, what really makes of this a unique example of divine death is the fact that, according to the text (pSalt 825) Geb is brought back to life, revoking the "first death" he suffered. This is the same that actually happens with hostile deities as Apophis and Seth, who, on the contrary, are ideally condemned to the so called "second death". Whereas the revival of Apophis is only temporary, we can assume that Geb's is not. However, if Apophis and Seth come back to life, it is only because their presence is necessary to maintain the cosmic order. On the contrary, the reason for Geb's resuscitation cannot be traced back to this. It must have some kind of political reason or ritual meaning, namely the vivifying ceremonial performed on the statuettes of Osiris.

⁴⁸ Von Lieven, 2015, p. 201.

CHAPTER 8

THE ANCESTOR GODS¹

A phenomenon of the Ptolemaic Period is the worship of creator gods as defunct ancestors. Mounds supposed to house their mummies are known in Medinet Habu, Edfu and Esna². The Theban Ogdoad is an example but the most extensive evidence is certainly that from the temple of Edfu, where, similarly, nine ancestor gods received a funerary cult. There we find so many ritual scenes of the adoration of deities that are barely found in other temples. As for the Late Period, such scenes are actually not found in the temples of Dendera, Kom Ombos and Philae. For its part, the temple of Karnak, only offers a limited number of reliefs referring to the Hermopolitan Ogdoad³.

8.1. The Ogdoad and Kematef at Thebes

The Ogdoad of Hermopolis (*hmn.yw*) was a group of eight primeval deities who personified different entities of the state of the world before the creation. Their cult was particularly popular in the Ptolemaic Period but they played an important role already in New Kingdom Thebes, where they were adored because of their association with Amun, actually considered to be one of them. The existence of the Ogdoad prior to the New Kingdom has been rejected and Zivie-Coche demonstrated that the presumed mention of some of its members in the *Pyramid*⁴ and *Coffin Texts*⁵ is actually an allusion to other entities and not to the Ogdoad proper.

¹ Exhaustive studies on the Ogdoad are still lacking. The work by Sethe (1929) is still authoritative as collection of texts dealing with those deities, but has been long contested in regard to the supposed Hermopolitan origin of Amun. Recently, Zivie-Coche is gradually filling this lacuna with her publications (2009, 2013, 2015) and conferences on the Ogdoad. As for the Ennead of Edfu and the ancestor gods of Esna, comprehensive studies on them have not yet been carried out. A slim bibliography, when existing, is quoted throughout the chapter.

² Sauneron, Yoyotte, 1959, p. 43; Zivie-Coche, 2003, p. 73.

³ Reymond, 1963, p. 49.

⁴ PT 301, comprising a prayer for the ascension of the deceased king, cites Nun and Naunet along with Amun and Amaunet (§§ 446a-c) stating that they are protecting the gods with their shades. According to Zivie-Coche (2005-2006, p. 130), their identification with two couples of the Ogdoad is “parfaitement douteux”.

⁵ The concerned spells are from the *Book of Shu* (CT 75-80). They attribute the creation of eight chaos-gods (*hh.w*) to Shu, who is said to have created them from the efflux of his members or flesh (CT 76, CT 78). Such entities are in charge of the chambers of the sky and of preparing the ladder for Shu’s ascension

Each couple was formed by a male and female figure representing a primordial element, thus Nun and Naunet symbolized the primeval water, Heh and Hauhet infinity, Kek and Kauket darkness, Amun and Amaunet hiddenness. Religious traditions considered them to be the sons of Amun, Thoth or even Ptah⁶. As a matter of fact, Ptah – just like the Ogdoad – is strictly connected with Hermopolis⁷, where his cult met great fortune. However, as for the city, investigations of toponymy and theonym revealed that the relationship between the name of the city and that of the gods has long been misinterpreted. According to Zivie-Coche, we would not be dealing with the “city of the Eight” (*hmn.w*) – the name by which Hermopolis was called as early as the Old Kingdom⁸, when the cult of the Ogdoad did not exist yet⁹ – but with “those of the city Eight”¹⁰.

The complete list of their names appears only on the walls of the Ptolemaic Period temples. Sometimes two members of one of the couple are substituted by two other deities, namely Niou and Niout, the etymology of whose names is still uncertain but probably derives from the term “nothing”¹¹. Additional variations also are known. For instance, in the temple of Hibis in el-Khargeh oasis the names of Gereh and Gerehet appear in an inscription, dating back to the time of Darius, from the second register of the south wall of hypostyle M¹². They are represented by Kek and Kauket, substituting the couple of K̄erh and K̄erhet, which in its turn was depicted next to Kek and Kauket on the east wall of room J¹³. They are apparently the personification of the word “night” (*grh*)¹⁴. However, Gereh and Gerehet are not attested anywhere other than this temple. Moreover, in the Ptolemaic temples of Edfu, Dendera¹⁵, and Qasr el-Agouz the couple of Hemsu and Hemset made its first appearance¹⁶. Their names mean “he/she who is seated” and is to connect with the nature of the Ogdoad as dead gods. Sethe indeed

(CT 76). Yet, their number should not be intended as a reference to the Hermopolitan Ogdoad. On this matter see Zivie-Coche, 2005-2006, p. 130-131.

⁶ On this see Sethe, 1929, p. 42, §52-53.

⁷ The modern el-Ashmunein, whose name derives indeed from *shmun*, the Coptic term for “eight”.

⁸ Borchardt, 1913, pl. 21.

⁹ Indeed, in Hermopolis, as well as elsewhere, the Ogdoad made its first appearance only in XVIII Dynasty sources, namely in a dedicatory inscription by Hatshepsut on the Speos Artemidos; cf. Gardiner, 1946.

¹⁰ 2005-2006, p. 128.

¹¹ Roeder, 1959, p. 172.

¹² Davies, 1953, p. 25 and 33. This temple is the only surviving one dating back to the Persian Period.

¹³ Davies, 1953, p. 20 and pl. 21

¹⁴ Roeder, 1959, p. 172.

¹⁵ V, 19, 10-11.

¹⁶ Their names also occur on a funerary bed dating back to the Roman Period and coming from Thebes. The Ogdoad is completely absent from the *Book of the Dead* as well as from other funerary documents and funerary furniture. This bed is the only attestation known; cf. Needler, 1963, p. 14-15.

suggested their derivation from the verb *hmsi* (“to sit” or “to dwell”) and hence their personification of motionless existence.

The most ancient depiction of the Ogdoad dates back to the XXVI Dynasty and is found on the Naos of Amasis¹⁷ (Louvre Museum, D 29), a monolith of pink granite recovered from the sea near Alexandria. The naos housed a statue of “Osiris of the riverbank”, whose temple, completely destroyed, has been discovered in Kom el-Ahmar, in western Delta. According to the typical iconography, the male deities were represented as anthropomorphic frog-headed entities, whereas the female ones were snake-headed¹⁸. The choice of those animals is to be connected with the primeval nature of such creatures, evidently thought to represent the primordial characteristics of the eight gods at best. Moreover, relinking to the conception that death has never been considered *per se* in ancient Egypt, the hieroglyphic sign of the frog, by means of a rebus, can spell the expression *whm nh*, “renewing life”¹⁹. Such a practice occurred already in the New Kingdom. Besides, the ancient Egyptians were indeed familiar with frog sexual productiveness.

What actually makes the Ogdoad so special is the fact that the eight gods were considered to be dead. The theology built around them states in fact that, after taking part together in the creation of the world, the eight gods died and withdrew into the Underworld. But, even though dwelling in the reign of the dead, the Ogdoad still played an important role, letting the sun rise and the Nile flow by means of its power. The Eight were believed to be buried in the mound of Djeme, located in the area of Medinet Habu, on the western bank of the Nile. Along with them also their father Kematef, was believed to rest in there with them. It is not by chance that the mound of Djeme was actually termed the “Netherworld of Kematef”. As for this god, his name in particular connects him with the idea of death and dying. It indeed means “he who has completed his time”, suggesting the idea of a deity ending his lifespan and passing away as the natural result of his existence. The Ptolemaic theology conceived him as the snake hypostasis of Amun, who indeed emerged from the primeval water in the form of a serpent. Consequently, Kematef was also considered the dead form of Amun. Thus, the

¹⁷ The monument has been edited by Piankoff, 1933. The Ogdoad (Heh, Hauhet, Kek, Kauket, Niau, Niat, Amun, Amaunet) are portrayed in the upper register of the naos’ back face. They are frog-headed (males) and snake-headed (females) and their feet have the form of a jackal’s head (Piankoff, 1933, p. 167, fig. 7).

¹⁸ Whereas the zoomorphic iconography is the ordinary one in temples outside Thebes, in Theban temples the Eight are mainly represented in human forms. For instance, see figures 13 and 14. Nonetheless, in other instances these deities are depicted in the form of baboons, recalling their function of adoring the newly born sun in the morning. On the Eight’s iconography see Zivie-Coche, 2006-2007, p. 74-76.

¹⁹ Zivie-Coche, 2009, p. 178.

cult offered to him in the small temple of Medinet Habu, which was considered to contain his tomb, stands in opposition to the worship of Amun as “living god” in Luxor.

8.1.1. *The meaning of the Ogdoad’s name and epithets in connection with their death*

The fact that the eight primeval gods were essentially conceived as dead gods is proved not only by temple inscriptions but also by their names. The first evidence in this sense supports the idea of the Ogdoad being subject to time as well. The spelling in particular is very interesting. As a matter of fact, in the Ptolemaic Period the Ogdoad’s name used also to be written by means of a rebus: the sign of an old man leaning on a stick following that of a child. Both of them are enclosed in a cartouche. It consequently reads *hm* + *nni*, playing both on phonetic and pseudo-etymology²⁰. So, the Eight are practically designated as “weary” or “inters” (verb *nni*) but yet are still in close connection with the idea of renewal and rebirth (sign of the child) granted by death. Nevertheless, the writing is in close connection with *hmn.yw*, their proper name.

Epithets show the same and essentially describe the eight gods as dead entities. They are generally addressed as: *tp.yw*- (“the ancestors”), *dd.w*²¹ (“the enduring ones”), *p3w.tyw*²² (“primeval ones”), *p3w.tyw tp.yw*²³ (“the first primordial ones”), *nb.w 3.w*, and *ntr.w wr.w*²⁴ (both meaning “the great gods”). Apart from epithets calling them “the ancestors” or “primeval ones”, which actually suggest only their primordial character, nothing insinuates the connection between the Ogdoad and death. An additional designation of them is also *nni.w*, meaning “the tired ones” or even “the inert ones”. The verb *nni* (“to be tired”) is indeed a euphemistic expression to refer to death, and consequently dead people are spoken of as “the tired ones” as early as the Middle Kingdom²⁵. Nonetheless, in some instances this term seems to have a stronger shade of meaning, indicating death as total destruction²⁶. In Ptolemaic temples *nni.w* appears as an epithet of the Ogdoad, substituting *hmn.yw* and not simply being a defective writing

²⁰ Zivie-Coche, 2009, p. 178; Zivie-Coche, 2006-2007, p. 76.

²¹ Wilson, 1991b, p. 2192-2193; LGG VII, p. 683.

²² Wilson, 1991a, 624-625.

²³ Wilson, 1991a, 625.

²⁴ Wilson, 1991a, 998-999.

²⁵ Wb 2, 275.15,

²⁶ In this regard, a verse of CT 485 indeed reads: “I am not tired (*nni*), I am not destroyed (*htm*)”. On this term see also Zandee, 1960, p. 83-84.

of their proper name²⁷. In a passage of the so-called Khonsu Cosmogony concerning the cosmogonic account (columns 27-48), unfortunately presenting some lacunae, a serpent is named Amun. It is said of him that he is the “father of the fathers of the [Ogdoad (*hmn.yw*)] in the room of silence of the sacred land in the mound of Djeme²⁸” (columns 30-31). In this case, the word “Ogdoad” has been supplied, but, reading on, the second time that the Ogdoad is mentioned, the inscription possibly employs the term *nn.yw*. As a matter of fact, the reading of such word is quite uncertain: it might either be read *nn.yw* or *hmn.yw*²⁹. As for the latter, the spelling of the word with the double *n* sign, deriving from the hieratic writing of the numeral “eight” with two *s* signs³⁰, is not uncommon and is attested, among others, in the temple of Hibis (hypostyle M, south wall, middle register)³¹. This epithet is known from the propylon of the temple of Khonsu³² as well, and also occurs in pLeiden T 32³³. A passage (III, 12-14) reads:

pLeiden T32

sn-n-k t3 hr išd šps
*ir-n-k s.t-k hr hmh.w-f*³⁴
dg3-k nnw dmd m 4

m ir.w-sn [III,14] m k3 rnp
p-tr-n-k id.wt-sn dmd m sp
*m ir.w-sn n 'nt'*³⁶

You have kissed the earth under the noble ished-tree,
 you have taken your place under its branches.
 You have seen the tired ones assembled in number of
 four,
 in their forms [III,14] of young bull.
 You have watched their cows³⁵ assembled together
 in their forms of Anat³⁷.

²⁷ Zivie-Coche, 2009, p. 178.

²⁸ *it it.w n 'hmn.yw' m 't igr.t* [31] *t3 dsr m iz.t-iz-mw.t'*. Mendel, 2003, p. 66-67, pl. 6; Parker, Lesko, 1988, p. 170; Cruz-Urbe, 1994, p. 170 and 173.

²⁹ On this matter cf. Mendel, 2003, p. 70.

³⁰ Möller, 1965, p. 55, no. 621, and p. 60, no. 663.

³¹ Davies, 1953, pl. 33.

³² Clère, 1961, pl. 64; Firchov, 1957, p. 72,87b. A transliteration as well as an English translation are given in Egberts, 1995, p. 100-101.

³³ The papyrus has been dated to 65 AD on the basis of references from the deceased's biography (VII, 28-33). Cf. Vernus, 1980, p. 128-134; Herbin, 1994, p. 5. By contrast, Quack (1996) dates it to about 34 AD.

³⁴ This sentence has a transitory function, occurring also in II, 1.

³⁵ The term has the determinative of goddess.

³⁶ Herbin, 1994, p. 54, p. 156 and hieroglyphic transcription at p. 439-441.

³⁷ Anat is a Semitic deity known in the ancient Egyptian record from the end of the Middle Kingdom and the Hyksos Period. She was in strict connection with Astarte. Among her duties was that of protecting the pharaoh in her nature of warrior deity and eventually also assuring protection against hostile creatures. At Philae, Anat merged with the goddess Isis, receiving two mirrors as a gift from Emperor Augustus (Leclant, 1975, cols. 253-258).

Similarly, the eight are also called *hṭp.tyw*³⁸, literally meaning “those who are at rest” or “those who are content”, a clear recall of the euphemistic image of death as sleep.

8.1.2. Evidence of the mortuary cult of the Ogdoad

The cult of the eight primeval deities as dead gods is well attested for the Late and Ptolemaic Periods. It is indeed by that time that the Ogdoad appears among the deities represented in scenes engraved on the walls of temples. Nevertheless, the origin of their mortuary cult – or at least the conceptions revolving around their death – can be traced back to the New Kingdom. But, despite this, Medinet Habu, the sacred site considered to enclose their tombs, presents no direct mention of the “eight (primeval gods)” before its renovation under Hakor (XXIX Dynasty)³⁹.

However, in letters dating back to the end of the New Kingdom and to the beginning of the Third Intermediate Period the Ogdoad is mentioned in association with their presumed burial place. They read indeed that the eight gods “rest in the mound (*dḥm.t*) of he who is opposite to their Lord (*ḥft-ḥr-nb-s*)”⁴⁰. The verb *hṭp* (“to rest”) is obviously a euphemism to refer to death, evoking the metaphorical image of death as sleep. The concerned sources are: pPhillips (Malibu, Getty Museum 83.AI.46.1), pTurin 1971, and pBritish Museum EA 10375⁴¹. All the three of them date back to the XX Dynasty, and more precisely to the year 10 of the Renaissance⁴². The letters are part of the correspondence of the necropolis scribe Tuthmosis and his son Butehamun⁴³.

³⁸ Wb 3, 195.4; Wilson, 1991b, p. 1229-1130.

³⁹ See p. 239.

⁴⁰ It is a general designation for the rocky escarp of the western bank of the Nile, yet sometimes it can be used as name for the mound of Djeme itself. For this last instance see pRhind 1, VI h 10 / d 9, Möller, 1913, p. 32; pRhind 2, VII h 7 / d 7, Möller, 1913, p. 64.

⁴¹ All of them have been published by Černý, 1939, as numbers 15, 16, 28.

⁴² The so-called “Renaissance” (*wḥm-msw.t*) is the period extending from regnal year 19 of Ramses XI and lasting for the entire last decade of his reign. Ramses XI was still nominally pharaoh, whereas Upper Egypt was under the governor of the High Priest of Amun Herihor and Lower Egypt was controlled by Smendes, who, at the death of Ramses XI, founded the XXI Dynasty along with the new capital city Tanis.

⁴³ pTurin 1971 from Butehamun to Tuthmosis; pBritish Museum 10375 from the Butehamun and a second writer to Piankh; pPhillips from the prophet of Amenophis Amenhope to Tuthmosis. As for Tuthmosis, he received the letters while he was in Elephantine and Nubia to give his contribution in the Nubian war.

The scribe of the great and noble Necropolis of Millions of Years of Pharaoh, l.p.h., Dhutmose from the prophet of Amenophis Amenhotep son of Amennakht of the noble Necropolis (*hr*). In life, prosperity, and health and in favor of Amon-Re, King of the gods. I say *every day* to Amon-Re, King of the gods, the Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands, Foremost of Karnak, Pre-Harakhti when he rises and when he sets, to Atum, Lord of the Two Lands, the Heliopolitan, Khnum, who has fashioned the great and august Ogdoad who rests in the Promontory of Khefte-ḥi-nebos, l.p.h., and who has made for them the hills in which you are, to Amon of Djeme (*d3-m3 t*⁴⁴), to Hathor, mistress of the West, to Amenophis, l.p.h., Nofertari, l.p.h., Amon of the Beautiful Encounter, the King, l.p.h., who wears the White Crown and who rests in Khefte-ḥi-nebos, l.p.h., to give to you life, prosperity and health, a long lifetime, a good ripe old age, and very many favors before the general, your lord; and may Amon bring you back alive, prosperous, and healthy and we fill our embrace with you {...}⁴⁵.

The scribe of the great and noble Necropolis of Millions of Years of Pharaoh, l.p.h., Dhutmose from the scribe of the Necropolis Butehamon and the chantress of Amon-Re, King of the gods, Shedemdua and the chantress of Amon Hemesheri. In life, prosperity, and health and in the favor of Amon-Re, King of the gods. We say *every day* to Amon-Re, King of the gods, Mut, Khonsu, and all the gods of Thebes, Pre-Harakhti when he rises and when he sets, to Amon, Uni[t]ed with Eternity, to Amon of Djeme(*d3-m3 t*), Amon of the Throne(s) of the Two Lands, the great and august Ogdoad that rests in Khefte-ḥi-nebos, Mereseger, mistress of the West, Hathor, mistress of Deir el-Bahri and the mistress of the hills in which you are, Amenophis, l.p.h., Nofertari, l.p.h., and Amon of the Beautiful Encounter {...}⁴⁶.

The fan-bearer on the King's right, royal scribe, general, high priest of Amon-Re, [King of the gods], Vice[roy] of Kush, overseer of the southern foreign lands, granary overseer of Pharaoh's granaries, and [leader] of Pharaoh's troops, [Pai]ankh (from) the two chief workmen, the scribe of the Necropolis Butehamon, the guardian [Kar], and ... In life, prosperity, and health and in favor of Amon-Re, King of the gods. We say *every day* to Amon-Re, King of the gods, Mut, Khonsu, and all gods of Thebes, Pre-Harakhti when he rises and when he sets, to Amon, United with Eternity, and his Ennead, the great and august Ogdoad that rests (in) Khefte-ḥi-nebos, Mereseger, mistress of the

⁴⁴ *d3-m3 t* has been properly identified by Nelson, 1942, p. 135.

⁴⁵ Translation by Wente, 1967, p. 47-49.

⁴⁶ Translation by Wente, 1967, p. 49-51 and 1990, p.192-193.

West, and the gods of the land (i.e. Nubia) in which you are to give you life, prosperity, and health, a long lifetime and a good ripe old age, to give you [very many] favor[s before] Amon-Re, King of the gods, your lord, l.p.h., and may Amon bring you back prospering and you fill your embrace with Ne (i.e. Thebes) and we fill our eye(s) with the sight of you when you have returned alive, prospering, and healthy {...}⁴⁷.

The above quoted sources are a clear evidence of the fact that, by the end of the New Kingdom, the eight divinities of the Ogdoad were looked at as dead gods. The fact that this was acknowledged by private individual is even more significant.

To the very same period dates back also the first written evidence of the offering cult to the eight primeval gods. Their names are silenced, as well as their number, and they are referred to simply as “the great living bas who rest in the place of Amun united with eternity”. The offering cult was performed by the ithyphallic Amun of Luxor once every ten days when he visited the area of Medinet Habu, believed to have the eight primeval gods buried there. Nevertheless, the letter also mentions the sanctuary of “Amun united with eternity”, whose location was in the mortuary temple of Ramses III.

pBibliothèque Nationale 198, I

... [the Temple] of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Usermaaremeramon [in the Estate of A]mon. In life, prosperity, and health and [in the favor] of Amon-[Re, King of the gods]. I say *every day* to Amon-Re, King of the gods, to [Mu]t, Khonsu, and all the gods and goddesses of Thebes, to Amon, United with Eternity, and to his Ennead, to Mereseger, mistress of the West, to Amon, Holy of Place, the Lord of the West, and to every god and every goddess whom I see daily, to Amon of Luxor at each and every decade when he comes (to) offer water (to) the Great Living Ba's, who rest in the place of Amon, United with Eternity, resident in the place of the appearance of the decade, to give you life, prosperity, and health, and a long lifetime, a good ripe old age, and very many favors before the general, your lord, and to preserve you in his charge. And may Amon-Re, King of the gods, bring you back prospering and alive and (I) fill (my) embrace with you {...}⁴⁸.

As anticipated above, the connection between the Ogdoad and the temple of Medinet Habu is only made explicit from the time of the XXIX Dynasty. Under Hakor the peripteros of the small temple was restored and new polygonal columns were added

⁴⁷ Translation by Wente, 1967, p. 59-65 and 1990, p.194-195.

⁴⁸ Translation by Wente, 1967, p. 78-79.

to support the ambulatory's ceiling of the XVIII Dynasty temple, which the corner slabs erected by Tuthmosis III could not properly support⁴⁹. The mention of the Ogdoad is found in the four-vertical-line inscription, along with a text to the memory of Tuthmosis III, engraved on the north-eastern column. The concerned passage about the Ogdoad reads:

Inscription by Hakor from the small temple of Medinet Habu

<i>ir-n-fpr ʿ3 šps n it-f imn-r ʿhnt.i-ip.t-f</i>	He made great and noble palace for his
<i>d3-f r t3-mw.t hrw-10-tp nb</i>	father Amun who presides over his Ipet,
	(when) he ferries to Djeme at the beginning
	of every decade
<i>r w3h h.t n b3 n km.t n ʿb3.w n hmn.w</i>	to make offerings to the ba of Egypt and to
<i>nh d.t</i> ⁵⁰	the Eight, living forever.

The expression “(great) ba of Egypt” as well as “the great ba of he who has achieved his time” are two designations of Amun. Moreover, since the two names are phonetically similar, they were likely intended by the ancient Egyptians as a sole thing⁵¹. Below the inscription also states that “Montu, the Lord of Thebes, bull in Medamud, rejuvenates their flesh every day, may they live forever⁵²”.

So, at least by the time of Hakor, a clear association between the Ogdoad, Djeme and the small temple of Medinet Habu was well established. Their cult was particularly important because people wanted their own tombs to be associated with the gods'. In this way, among the benefit obtained, dead people could also enjoy the unceasing ritual offerings presented to the primeval gods every ten days, which consequently were reversed to them. In this regard, many sources indeed state that the ba of the deceased will unite with the Ogdoad in the mound of Djeme. This is what the *Ritual of Embalming*⁵³ reads, along with the *Book of Breathing* which, in its turn, demanded for the deceased's ba to dwell in Djeme next to the Ogdoad⁵⁴.

⁴⁹ On the various phases of the small temple of Medinet Habu see Hölscher, 1939, p. 44-62, in particular p. 55 in regard to the restoration under Hakor.

⁵⁰ Hieroglyphic transcription in Traunecker, 1981, p. 109-110, 2.

⁵¹ Traunecker, 1981, p. 117.

⁵² *mntw nb w3s.t k3 hr-ib m3d.w rnp h ʿw-sn hrw nb ʿnh d.t*; Traunecker, 1981, p. 110, 4.

⁵³ Sauneron, 1952, p. 9-10; Smith, 2009, p. 229-230.

⁵⁴ Herbin, 1984, p. 265-266 and 268-269.

8.1.3. The Ogdoad as gods at rest

References to the Ogdoad are numerous in the Late and Ptolemaic Periods. Some of those, such as statues of private individuals inscribed with praises to the gods and funerary papyri, simply state that the Ogdoad dwells in the mound of Djeme⁵⁵ (*im.w i3.t-t3-mw.t*) or in Imehet⁵⁶ (*imh.t*), a term generally used to designate the necropolis of a certain place⁵⁷. This of course implies that they must be dead in order to reside in those regions. Nevertheless, the above quoted late Ramesside letters already employ the typical terminology to refer to the Ogdoad's death, namely the statement that the gods are "at rest" (*htp*), it being a clear euphemistic expression.

An inscription from the propylon of the temple of Khonsu (Bab el-Amara) referring to the relief of Ptolemy III Euergetes censuring four of the primeval gods (Amun, Amaunet, Nun, Naunet; figure 13) lists the titles of the eight and, after explaining their origin, makes some statements concerning their death:

Propylon of the temple of Khonsu

<i>hmn.yw</i> {...} <i>skm</i> 'h 'w-s <i>n</i> m i <i>wnn</i> -s <i>n</i> <i>hnt</i> <i>wh</i> 't3 <i>htp</i> m n <i>w</i> .t-s <i>n</i> m i3.t-d3m.t	The Ogdoad {...} who completed their lifetime in their sanctuary in <i>wh</i> 't3, who rests in their sky in the mound of Djeme,
<i>hnmt</i> - 'nh n b3 '3 kmt	in the necropolis of the great ba of Kem(a)t(ef),
<i>m33 sdm</i> i <i>w</i> .t <i>i</i> m <i>r</i> h 'nh r h <i>h</i> n <i>hp</i> r d <i>t</i>	he who sees and hears, who does not decay, who lives up to eternity and lasts to perpetuity,
<i>nwr mnmn</i> m h <i>r</i> .w	who quakes and trembles in front of the faces (i.e. the people).

⁵⁵ They are: A) Statue Cairo CG 660 of *hr-m-m3* 'h*rw*, from Medinet Habu, Late Period; in Borchardt, 1930, p. 8-9. B) Statue Cairo CG 969 of *p3-di-hr-p3-r* 'h*rw*, from Medinet Habu, Late Period. The offering formula on the front side is addressed to Amun holy of place (*imn d*st*-s.t*), the Eights, addressed as the great ones of the first time, and to the four goddesses of who are in the mound of Djeme and in Imehet. In Borchardt, 1934, p. 8. C) Papyrus of Nesmin (British Museum EA 10209), Late Period. It is a glorification text employed in the ceremony of the Beautiful Feast of the Valley. In a passage dedicated to the numerous gods associated to Osiris of Coptos, the Ogdoad is mentioned as "the gods and goddesses who are in the mound of Djeme" (cf. Haikal, 1970, p. 40). An English translation of the full text is available in Smith, 2009, p. 178-192.

⁵⁶ Statue Cairo CG 680 of *ns-mnw*, from Medinet Habu, Late Period. The inscription on the front is an offering formula addressed to Amun holy of place (*imn d*st*-s.t*) and the Ogdoad. In Borchardt, 1930, p. 24-25, pl. 124.

⁵⁷ The original meaning of this term seems to be "cavern/cave" and consequently the place where the dead dwell. A text from Edfu (II, 144, l. 17) states that Imehet is the place of origin of the Nile River. On this term cf. Goyon, 1967, p. 133.

wnn-sn r gs-f m tph.t-f nwn 'nh r hh hm They are at his side in the caver of Nun⁵⁹,
*sk*⁵⁸ living for eternity, not knowing destruction.

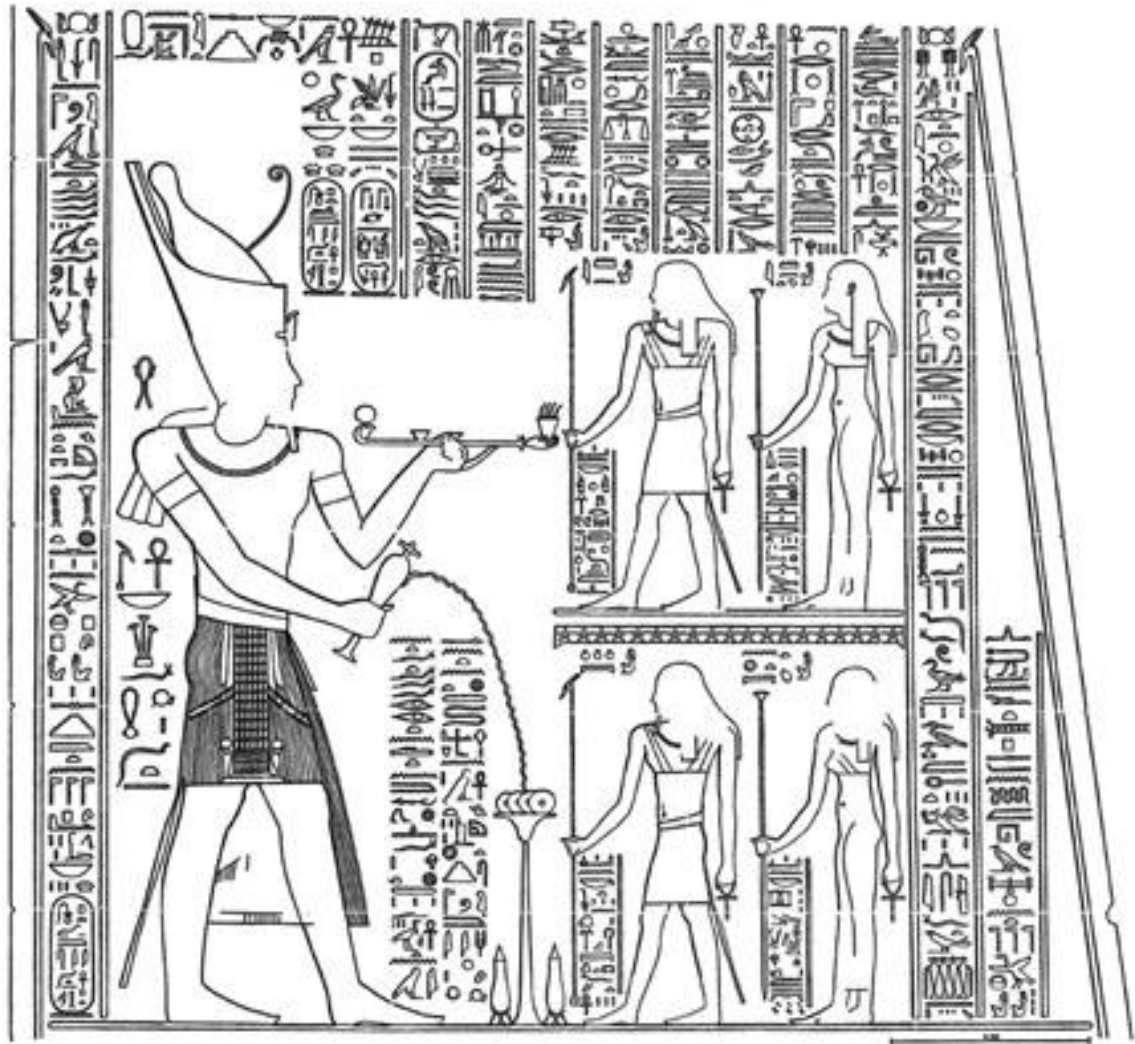


Figure 13. Relief from the propylon of the temple of Khonsu (Bab el-Amara), western interior face, northern jamb, fifth register, depicting king Ptolemy III Euergetes performing acts of libation and censuring before Amun and Amaunet (upper register) and Nun and Naunet (lower register), all of which are depicted in anthropomorphic form. Source: Clère, 1961, pl. 49.

This passage gives us a lot of information about them. Apart from their origin, the text states indeed that they have completed their lifespan – once again a

⁵⁸ Clère, 1961, pl. 49; Firchov, 1977, p. 80, 95c; Zivie-Coche, 2009, p. 189-190.

⁵⁹ The first explicit mention of the “cavern of Nun” dates back to the XXIII Dynasty and is found in an inscription from the temple of Osiris *hk3-d.t* at Karnak accompanying also the depiction of a sacred mound. Further on, text specifies that the concerned hillock is the “sacred mound of Djeme” (Cf. Parker, Leclant, Goyon, 1979, p. 53-53, pl. 23; Gabolde, 1995, p. 248-249). Also another inscription from the propylon of the temple Khonsu mentions the “cavern of Nun”, in this case, in association with the offering ritual of Kematef (Cf. Firchov, 1997, p. 57, 69b). However, the “cavern of Nun” was considered the local source of the Nile River, the place where the flood was believed to rise.

demonstration that they were subject to the passing of time – and that they consequently dwell in Djeme, next to Kematef. Other sources mention the fact that they completed their time, for instance Opet I, 27⁶⁰. A similar passage is found also on the propylon of the temple of Montu, on which after a brief introduction about their origin and activities as creation gods, the Eight are said, once again, to be at rest.

Propylon of the temple of Montu

*ḳ iwnn-sn ḥnt nwnt
ḥtp m ḥrt-sn m ḥft-ḥr-n-nb-s
s.t-ib-sn sp3.t-sn mtrt*⁶²

(They) who enter their sanctuary in the Nun,
who rest in their sky in *ḥft-ḥr-n-nb-s*⁶¹,
their favorite place, their genuine district.

The assimilation of their death to a sleep is ever-present in the sources. Sometimes the terminology might slightly variate but the basic idea remains unchanged. For instance, an inscription located on the western door of the hypostyle of the Opet temple reads that they are “at rest (*ḥtp*) in their house (*nīw.t-sn*) in [the mound of Djeme (?)]”⁶³.

The idea of the Ogdoad resting is found outside of temple inscriptions too. It occurs in the so-called *Book of Fayum*, also dating back to the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods. The concerned passage reads as follows:

Book of Fayum

*ḥḥ.w ḥḥ.wt kk.w kk.wt nn ntr.w nw p3w.t-
tp.y
ḥtp.yw m ḥnw kriwt-sn m ʿyw-sn ds-sn*⁶⁴

Heh, Hauhet, Kek, Kauket, these gods of
the first time,
who rest in their chapel, in their arms, in
themselves.

Only two couples of the Ogdoad are mentioned but the entire group of eight gods is clearly intended. As for the chapel mentioned in the text, the lake of the Fayum

⁶⁰ *skm(.w) ḥ ʿ-sn m iwnn ḥnt wh ʿ-t3*. “Who completed their lifespan in the sanctuary of Heliopolis”; Clère, 1961, pl. 49; Firchov, 1957, p. 80, 95c. For the translation *wh ʿ-t3* “Heliopolis” see Meeks, 2006, p. 66, no. 17.

⁶¹ Literally meaning “she who is opposed to their lord”. It is the designation of a goddess; cf. LGG V, p. 725.

⁶² Firchov, 1977, p. 30, 35c; Zivie-Coche, 2009, p. 191.

⁶³ De Wit, 1958, p. 27.

⁶⁴ Beinlich, 1991, p. 190-191, lines 534-537.

is meant. In the same way, the lake seems to be considered as the place of origin of these primeval gods (line 129)⁶⁵, along with their living place, named in line 1204 as their “chapel”⁶⁶.

8.1.4. The Ogdoad as dead gods

In a scene depicting the resurrection of Osiris from the temple of Opet (northern room, north wall, second register, western part) we find an interesting statement. The kind of text we are dealing with is different from the other sources cited above, since, in this instance, the subject is not the Ogdoad’s titles but is a praise which the eight gods address to Osiris, who is in fact the central character. After exalting Osiris as the greatest of the gods, a deity who has no equals, the text refers to the Ogdoad stating that they are resting in their bodies. In addition to this, it also clearly mentions their tombs.

Temple of Opet

<i>wnn psd.t 'k-tw m d.t-sn</i>	The council of gods ⁶⁷ is (reunited), entering their bodies,
<i>nbi-tw hft wd-n-k</i>	fashioned when you ordered (it),
<i>im3 n-k ntr.w nb.w m</i>	all the gods rejoice for you in their tombs;
<i>'h .t-sn nfr(?) n-k d.t-sn</i>	their bodies are perfect(?) for you.
<i>htp ... -k</i> ⁶⁸	At rest ...

Another statement concerning the bodies of the eight primeval gods is found in the *Book of Fayum*. The passage likely deals with the opposition of the well-known resting place of Djeme and the Ogdoad’s continuation of life in the Fayum Lake.

Book of Fayum

<i>dd in hmn.w r-f</i>	Said by the eight to him:
<i>'nh-n im-f mi nty r h3.t</i> ⁶⁹	“we live in him as before,

⁶⁵ The proper meaning of a key word in the text is unfortunately unsure.

⁶⁶ Cf. Beinlich, 1991, p. 287.

⁶⁷ The term is to be intended as a group of god and not as the Heliopolitan Ennead since the text is inscribed just above the relief of Kek and Kauket. As Reymond (1963, p. 62) underlines *psd.t indeed* applies to the Heliopolitan Ennead, the Hermopolitan Ogdoad, the Little Ennead and to the fourteen kas of Ra.

⁶⁸ De Wit, 1958, p. 118-119; Zivie-Coche, 2009, p. 192.

⁶⁹ The variation *mi nty h3s.t bhd* (“as in the land of perfume”) occurs in Bo. A.

shṭp ḏ.t-n m i3.t-t3-mw.t
*‘nh-n im-f hrw nb*⁷⁰

since we rest in our bodies in the mound of Djeme.
We live in it⁷¹ every day”.

8.1.5. The dynamics of the Ogdoad’s death

As for the cause of the Ogdoad’s death, we can assume it being essentially a natural one. It actually happened at the end of their given time, after their lifespan was completed. This is what a passage from an inscription from the temple of Edfu suggests, reading that once their lifetime was completed, the god ferried them to the mound of Djeme⁷², identified with the small temple of Medinet Habu, where the dead gods received a funerary cult. To this inscription a further one from the pylon of the temple of Khonsu at Karnak, already quoted above⁷³, is to be added.

However, a description of the circumstances of their passing away is not given. In opposition to the Ennead of Edfu, while referring to the Ogdoad, the text does not employ euphemistic images such as that of their *bas* coming out and flying to the sky to describe their death.

Edfu I, 289,6-7

hṭs-n-f tpy.w- ‘ m-ht km ‘h ‘-sn

He (i.e. Thoth⁷⁴) embalmed the ancestors after their lifespan was completed.

ḏ3-f hr-sn r sp3.t imnt.t
i3.t-t3-mw.t dw3t n km-3t-f

He sailed with them to the western district, the Mound of Djeme, the Duat of Kematef⁷⁵.

The term used to refer to the ending of the gods’ lifetime is the verb *km* which means “to complete”, as in the god Kematef’s name, consequently meaning “he completed his time”. Thus, after his time has ended, he simply passed away. Similarly, the inscription from the temple of Khonsu, reads *skm*, having the exact same meaning.

⁷⁰ Transcription after Beinlich, 1991, p. 262-263.

⁷¹ The Fayum Lake is possibly intended.

⁷² In addition to Edfu I, 289,6-8, their necropolis in Djeme is mentioned also in Edfu III, 312,6.

⁷³ See p. 240-241.

⁷⁴ For Thoth in Djeme see Volokine, 2002, p. 421-423.

⁷⁵ Klotz, 2012, p. 182.

8.1.6. The return to the Nun

Various ancient Egyptian texts mention the return to the state preceding creation, a time in which the universe had the form of an infinite ocean of primeval water. Clear statements concerning the end of creation in particular occur CT 1130 and in the later BD 175. There, Atum, when conversing with Osiris, states that only the two of them will survive. Then, since time is cyclical, a subsequent renewal of creation will follow. This is the fate awaiting the entire world, divine beings comprised⁷⁶, and thus also the Ogdoad is caused to come back to the state preceding creation, namely the Nun.

In this way, the description of the return to the Nun of the eight primeval gods turns out to be exactly another way to refer to their death. The text dealing with this matter is found on the pylon of the temple of Khonsu (Bab el-Amara) next to the scene depicting Ptolemy III Euergetes censuring four of the primeval gods (Heh, Hauhet, Kek, Kauket; figure 14), a pendant to the other scene already discussed above⁷⁷.

Propylon of the temple of Khonsu

<i>ḳ-sn m nwn ḥr it-sn ḳm3-sn</i> <i>šsp-sn dw3.t nt km-3.t-f</i> ⁷⁸	They enter the Nun with their father who created them and they take possession of the Duat of Kematef.
--	---

Similarly, also on the second pylon of the temple of Montu, in an inscription referring to a censuring and libation scene, we read once again that the Ogdoad enters (ḳ) “the mound of Djeme, the sacred Duat of Kematef”. The return to the Nun as well is mentioned at the beginning of the passage:

Second pylon of the temple of Montu

<i>ḥmnw ḳ-sn m nwn ḥnt ḥw.t-bnbn</i> <i>iw-sn d3 r 3ḥ.t izb.tt n m3d.w</i> <i>ḳ-sn r iz.t-d3m.t</i> <i>dw3.t dsr.t nt km-3.t-f</i> <i>imn it it.w n ḥmnw</i> ⁷⁹	The Eight enter the Nun in the temple of Benben. They ferry to the eastern horizon of Medamud They enter in the mound of Djeme the sacred Duat of Kematef, Amun, the father of fathers of the Eight.
--	--

⁷⁶ On this issue see p. 34-36.

⁷⁷ See p. 240-241 and figure 13.

⁷⁸ Clère, 1961, pl. 67; Firchov, 1977, p. 75, 90c; Zivie-Coche, 2009, p. 190.

⁷⁹ Firchov, 1977, p. 118, 145i.

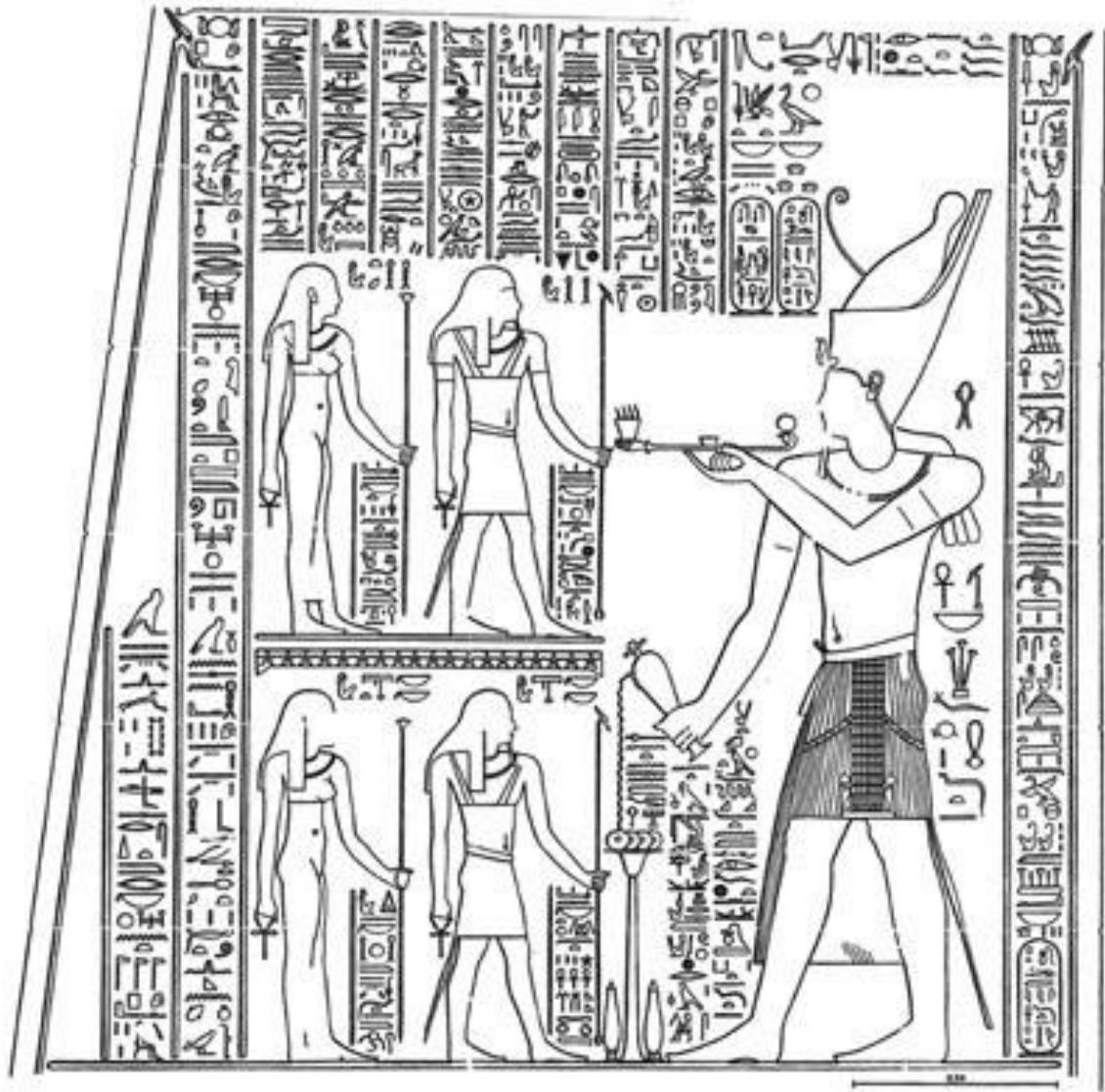


Figure 14. Relief from the propylon of the temple of Khonsu (Bab el-Amara), eastern interior face, northern jamb, fifth register, depicting king Ptolemy III Euergetes performing acts of libation and censing before Heh and Hauhet (upper register) and Kek and Kauket (lower register), all of which are depicted in anthropomorphic form. Source: Clère, 1961, pl. 67.

8.2. The Ennead of Edfu

The funerary cult offered to the Ogdoad is certainly the most known. However, next to this, the cult of the Ennead buried in Edfu equally had great importance. The funerary cult of the local ancestor gods was carried out during the Beautiful Feast of Behedet (*shn nfr n bhd.t*)⁸⁰. The celebration consisted in the annual visit of Hathor of Dendera, who in her processional barge was towed upriver toward Edfu in a 180-km-

⁸⁰ For this festival and all the texts from Edfu describing it see Alliot, 1979b, p. 4

journey, where Horus of Behedet welcomed her on the day of new moon of the third month of Shemu (the Greek Epiphi). The festival lasted fifteen days, up to the day of the full moon. During the festival various ceremonies were performed. Inscriptions⁸¹ and reliefs⁸² in the open court of the temple describe them in detail.

The aim of the feast was to celebrate the marriage of Horus of Edfu and Hathor of Dendera. Central themes of the commemoration were fertility and regeneration and among the most important rituals were essentially rites of the harvest festival. However, on the second day, the procession visited the burial ground of Behedet which was located in the desert to the west or south-west of the temple. On their way, the cortege stopped at the Upper Temple. There the participants presented funerary offerings, offered burnt sacrifices, sang hymns, made libations to the divine ancestor, and performed the ceremony of treading the grave⁸³. Such ceremonies assured the regeneration of the primordial gods and allowed – paraphrasing an inscription – the divine bas to live again and their mummies to become young again⁸⁴. Of course, along with their renewal, took place also that of whole Egypt.

Many inscriptions from the temple of Edfu deal with these divine figures⁸⁵. They were nine in number – the fact which caused them to be called *psd.t* – and were designated as the “children of Ra” (*ms.w r*). The texts of Edfu also list their names, which actually diverge from one inscription to another. Similarly, also the order in which the nine of them were portrayed changed. However, they were⁸⁶: *b3-nb-dd*⁸⁷ (“the ram lord of Djedet”), *hry-š-f*⁸⁸ (“He who is over his lake”), *mnḥ.y/imnḥ.y*⁸⁹ (“the Butcher”), *nmty*⁹⁰ (“the Wanderer”), *ntr-ʿ3-m-sp3.t-f*⁹¹ (“the Great God in his nome”), *nb-šn.w*⁹² (“lord of the trees”), *bn.w-hpr-ds-f*⁹³ (“the benu-bird who comes into

⁸¹ Chassinat, 1930, p. 28-35 and 124-136.

⁸² Edfou X, pls. CXXI-CXXII and CXXVI-CXXVII.

⁸³ Fairman, 1954-1955, p. 196-198.

⁸⁴ *b3.w nḥ.w nḥ-sn s[p] s h.w wḥm mp*. Edfu, V 29, 13; Alliot, 1979b, p. 509-510.

⁸⁵ The texts dealing with them are: Edfu I, 173,3-174,7; I 382,4-15; II, 51,7-52,8; III, 301,8-16; 323,5-12; IV, 83,4-85,8; IV, 102,17-103,13; IV 239,13-241,14; V, 61,17-63,16; V 160,12-162,6; VII; 118,4-119,8; VII, 279,16-281,2.

⁸⁶ A table recapitulating the gods’ names and listing their occurrences has been supplied by Gaber, 2009, p. 132-133, table 3.4.

⁸⁷ In the texts of the temple of Edfu his name also occurs as *b3-nb-dd-tp.y-sn.wy-f* and *b3-nb-dd-hnt-ns.t*. LGG II, p. 683-684.

⁸⁸ LGG V, p. 381-382.

⁸⁹ LGG III, p. 304.

⁹⁰ In the texts of the temple of Edfu his name also occurs as *nmty-wr-ph.ty* and *nmty-hnt.y-niwt*. LGG IV, p. 242-244.

⁹¹ LGG IV, p. 413.

⁹² LGG III, p. 753.

⁹³ In one instance, his name also occurs as *bn.w-ntr.ti-r-hpr-ds-f*. Cf. LGG II, p. 795-797.

existence by himself”), *hnty-bḥd.t*⁹⁴ (“foremost in Behedet”), *nb-ḥw.t-w ‘r.t*⁹⁵ (“lord of Avaris”), *sth-n-n3-šn.w*⁹⁶ (“Seth of the trees”, i.e. Seth of Chenoboskion), *sth-n-wnn.t* (erroneously for *sth-n-wns*⁹⁷, “Seth of Wns”) and *sth-n-sp3.t* (“Seth of the nome”).

They were likely a creation of the very mythology of the temple of Edfu, since they do not appear outside of this context⁹⁸. According to Jelinková, the Ennead of Edfu was the result of the association of deities originated in different places and then taken over by the Middle Egyptian cult-places. There, gods taken from elsewhere were considered to be ancestral deities. This theory might then have been generalized, involving also the nine gods we are dealing with⁹⁹.

They were represented with mummiform shape, figuring four times in this form¹⁰⁰. This, of course, denotes them as dead gods, as well as their epithet of “the gods in *3ḥ.t nḥḥ* (*ntr.w hnt 3ḥ.t nḥḥ*¹⁰¹), it being the name of necropolis of Edfu. Nonetheless, the nine ancestors also appear in human form¹⁰².

Besides, we also are told about their origin, even though still obscure since the texts of Edfu give two different versions of the event¹⁰³. What emerges for sure is that they came from various places, travelled through the whole Egypt and were finally buried at Edfu. Whereas the origin of the Ennead is uncertain, indications about their burial place are precise. Not only is it said to be in Edfu (*bḥd.t*) but it is more precisely located in *3ḥ.t nḥḥ*, indeed the necropolis of the city. Nevertheless, sources do not mention the number of their tombs, namely if they were buried together or separately.

The texts dealing with them are perfectly in line with the ancient Egyptian conceptions of death. The bas of these gods are mentioned and are said to be dwelling in Edfu, along with their corpses, which, in their turn, are hidden in the mound hosting their necropolis. Even the funerary cult offered to them by Hathor and Horus of Edfu is described in details. Other interesting points to highlight are the mention of their mummies and of the fact that they have been embalmed. This element once more

⁹⁴ LGG V, p. 802-803.

⁹⁵ LGG III, p. 691-692.

⁹⁶ LGG VI, p. 697.

⁹⁷ LGG VI, p. 695.

⁹⁸ There is an actual reference to them in the temple of Dendera but they are identified as *ntr.w n bḥd.t* (Dendera IX, 241; Dendera XI, 58-59).

⁹⁹ 1962, p. 53.

¹⁰⁰ Edfu I 173, 1-174, I 8; I 382, 4-15; II 51, 3-52, 9; III 323, 5-12; IX, pls. 23a; 40d; 80; XII, pl. 327.

¹⁰¹ Edfu IV 240, 5-6.

¹⁰² Edfu III 301, 8-16; III 323, 5-12; IV, 83, 4-85, 8; IV 239, 13-241, 14; V 61, 17-63, 16; V, 160, 12-162,6; VII 118, 4-119, 9; VII 279, 16-281, 2; IX, pl. 79; X, pls. 85, 91, 117, 113.

¹⁰³ Edfu IV, 240 and V, 161.

demonstrates that not only was death a divine prerogative too, but that gods also were subject to death in the same way as people were. Their bodies had to be embalmed in order to be preserved and allow such deities to continue their existence. Their *bas* visited the world of the living and, as dead beings, such gods needed nourishment to regenerate and live on. Next to death, eternal life is necessarily mentioned and infinite time is even attributed to the ancestor gods. Their moment of passing away is referred to as ascension to the sky of their *bas*, an event which is said to have occurred in Behedet.

8.2.1. The death of the Ennead as ascension to the sky

As already explained, among the conceptions that the ancient Egyptian had of death, the ascension to the sky played an important role. Not only in the *Pyramid Texts* was the king believed to join Ra in his solar bark, but, in later time, the *ba* was still considered to be in the sky¹⁰⁴ whereas the body dwelled in the Netherworld. This is what a passage of the *Ritual of Embalming* (2,12) states, a text transmitted in its concluding part by two papyri dating back to the I century AD¹⁰⁵. A passage from the temple of Edfu dealing with this issue reads:

Edfu II, 51,8-11

*ntr.w 'nh.w pr m r '
psd.t ms.w tm
št3 m i3.t-sn hr mn.ti hr rs.i- imn.ti n db3
dr w3 ntrr db' shr.w-sn
n rf skm tpi-t3-sn
pr b3-sn m 'p r hr.t 'nh-sn mm 'nh.w
w3 ib n r' r dw hr m33 hpr n ms.w-f
wd-n hm-f r hts h3.wt-sn bw ir-sn im
nw m bhd.t dsr h3.wt-sn hw hbs.w r hh is-sn*

The living gods who came forth from Ra, the Ennead, the children of Atum, hidden in their mound, south-west of Edfu¹⁰⁶, since the god has come(?) to seal their decrees. Their desendence on earth has not ended. Their *ba* came out and flew to the sky, (where) they live among the stars. The heart of Ra was sad seeing what happened to his children. His majesty caused¹⁰⁷ their bodies to be buried in the place in which they were. They are embalmed in Edfu, their corpses are purified, the calves are hit to take care of their grave¹⁰⁸.

¹⁰⁴ On this aspect see Servajean, 2009, p. 9-14.

¹⁰⁵ They are pBoulaq III and pLouvre 5.158.

¹⁰⁶ *db3* is the name of the city of Edfu proper.

¹⁰⁷ For this meaning of *wd* cf. Wb, 1, p. 385.23.

Edfu VII, 118,9-14

*dd mdw ntr.w hnt bhd.t '3.w wr.w ms.w r'
pr im-f wt.t.w nw nt(i) wr m 3h.t nhh.w nw
p3w.tiw tpi(.w)*

*pr(.t) r hr.t in b3-sn n bhd.t 'nh-sn hn '
'nh.w thn-tw h3(.t)-sn ht i3.t ntri(.t) dsr-tw
st-sn m igr.t*

*hs(.t) r' r-sn in (hm) hr-3h.ti nw-tw-w m
bw pn*

*wd-n hm-f r imn imn.tt-sn r štz šty.t-sn r
tp.iw-t3 r s3h shr.w-sn r swr b3-sn r snfr t3
dr thn-sn*

*spr bhd.ti nb(.t)-iwn.t hr-sn r w3h ih.t n k3-
sn is b3.w- 'nh.w whm-sn 'nh mi [dfn]-sn*

[hn.ti-sn hhw] rnp.wt-sn mn.ti n bhd.t r d.t

Wors to say: (they are) the gods of Behedet, the very great, the children of Ra who came forth from him, the offspring of the great one¹⁰⁹ on the horizon, the progeny of the Primeval Ones.

The ascent to the sky of their ba(s) (took place) in Behedet. They (i.e. their bas) live with the stars, whereas their corpses have been hidden in the divine mound and their residence (i.e. tombs) made splendid in the necropolis.

Ra shall be praise because of them by (the majesty) of Harakhty since they were embalmed in this place.

His majesty ordered to make secret their necropolis, to protect their crypt from the living ones, to provide for their needs, to let their ba be great, to embellish the land since their hiding.

Behedeti and the Mistress of Dendera went to them in order to offer offerings to their ka(s) and at the same time to their living bas, who renew their life like their ancestor so that their period is infinite and their years are enduring in Behedet for eternity¹¹⁰.

Edfu VII, 280,3-9

*dd mdw ntr.w n bhd.t ms.w hr.3h.ti dsr s.t-
sn (m) bhd.t*

b3-sn imn m 3h.t-nhh h3.t-sn h3 m i3.t-štz.t

d.t-sn štz n rh sp-2 hr iwn-wr hnt bhd.t

i' r r 3h.t m 3h.t-nhh r gs bhd.t it-sn m nw.t

spr hr r bw hr hm-sn kbh-f n-sn mi it-f

Words to say: they are the gods of Behedet, the children of Harakhty, whose residence is hidden in Behedet.

Their ba(s) are hidden on the Horizon of Eternity (i.e. Edfu) whereas their corps(es) are in the Hidden Place (i.e. Edfu), their bod(ies) are hidden, unknown (twice) by the great pillar in Edfu, which mount up to the horizon from the Horizon of Eternity (i.e. Edfu) on the side of Behedet, their father, to the sky.

Horus arrives to the place in which are

¹⁰⁸ Hieroglyphic transcription in Chassinat, 1897, p. 51; French translation, along with hieroglyphic transcription, in Alliot, 1979b, p. 515-516.

¹⁰⁹ An epithet especially referred to Ra Behedeti, Ra-Harakhty and Horus Behedeti as sun god and creator god.

¹¹⁰ Hieroglyphic transcription in Chassinat, 1932, p. 118. Transliteration and German translation in Kurth, 2004, p. 210-211.

<i>mw.t-f im</i>	their majesties. He to pours libations to them as if his father and mother were there.
<i>mī.tt irīw m kbh (bhd.ti) kbh n s 'h-sn [...]</i>	Likewise (does he) as water pourer, Behedeti (i.e. Horus), who pours water on their mumm(ies) [...]
<i>n rh mī.tt-s šsp-sn sn.w hr nb-sn</i>	Nothing similar is known. They receive offerings from their lord.
<i>st m itī.w nw 18000 ntr.w irī.w mī.tt</i>	They are the lords of 18000 and of every god likewise.
<i>nb(.t)-iwn.t itī.ti r tr-s n rnp.t r sti mw hr k3-sn</i>	The Mistress of Dendera (i.e. Hathor) has come to their time of the year to pour water on their ka(s).
<i>mn.ti sp-2 ddi.ti sp-2 mī nw.t [hr] shn.wt-s 4</i>	They shall be enduring (twice), they shall be stable (twice) like the sky on his four supports.
<i>rnp.wt-sn m hḥ.w n rh [...] i3.t-sn ntri</i>	They years are millions. It is not known [...] their divine mound.
<i>wr ibd-sn '3 hrw-sn n rh tnw n wnw.t-sn</i>	Many are their years, numerous are their days. The number of their hours is not known.

Next to explaining about the ascension of the gods' bas, the quoted passages refer to the funerary cult which was offered them during the fest of Behedet but also to their mummification. It is said to have been caused by Ra who also ordered for them to be buried in the sacred necropolis of Edfu.

The statement "their ba came out and flew to the sky" is a typical image to describe the moment of passing away. We find this euphemism also in Edfu I 382, 10-15: the gods are said to "hide in their Duat (which is) on the western mountain south of Edfu (*wts.t-hr*, "the Throne of Horus") and "their bas, on their sides, fly up, entering the sky"¹¹¹.

8.2.2. The Ennead as gods at rest

Next to the euphemism of ascending the sky, the gods of the Ennead of Edfu were also conceived as gods at rest according to the typical image of death as sleep. This metaphor is indeed the one characterizing the dead gods which were venerated in temples of the Ptolemaic Period, as seen above with the Ogdoad.

¹¹¹ *b3.w-sn m gs-sn hri hnd hr p.t*. For the French translation of the complete passage see Alliot, 1979b, p. 516-517; For an alternative German translation see Kurt, 1994, p. 214-215.

Consequently the Ennead is designated as the “divine bas who are at rest in this place”¹¹². Another passage stressing this concept is quoted below.

Edfu I 173, 11-15

ḏḏ mdw ntr.w pr m r'psḏ.t ms.w tm

*št3(-sn) m hr.t hr p(3) mn hr rs-ımn.tt n
ḏb3*

t3-ḏsr-sn wr.t m bḥd.t

šty.t ḥ3.wt n ntr.w wr.w

k-s r' hr.ıt-tp hr-f w3ḥ-ḥ.t m sm.w-f

*n3 ḥ3.wt 3.w šps.w ntr.w nt.y ḥtp m bḥd.t
r'-nb*

nn wh' ı's-sn

nn th ḥ3.wt-sn

nn kfš'y hr šty.t-sn

w3ḥ-ḥ.t n k3-sn m hr.t-hrw nn sk r r3- ḏ.t

Words said by the living gods who came out from Ra, the Ennead, the children of Atum.

They are hidden in the necropolis which is on the mountain, south-west of Edfu, their great sacred land in Behedet, the sanctuary of the corpses of the great gods.

Ra enters in it (with) his uraeus on by him to make offerings to his children, who are great, noble and divine mummies¹¹³, who are at rest in Behedet every day.

Their tomb shall not be destroyed, their bodies shall not be damaged, the sand above their tomb shall not be removed.

Offerings will be made to their ka, daily, endless, for eternity¹¹⁴.

8.3. The primeval gods of Esna

Unfortunately, of the Ptolemaic temple of Esna, important cultural center of the period, only the hypostyle hall is preserved. Consequently, the corpus of inscription from this holy place is terribly limited when compared with other coeval temples, even though no other Egyptian temple is as eloquent as the one of Esna about the performing of rituals. Nonetheless, little is known of the ancestor gods of Esna. They were seven in number and were believed to have come out of the mouth of Neith as saying and to have then become divine creatures¹¹⁵. According to this cosmogony, the *ḏ3ı's.w*-gods are in practice the “active element of the word of Neith”, as Sauneron explains¹¹⁶. Nonetheless, they were conceived as dead gods and, according to the local tradition,

¹¹² *b3.w ntr.w nty ḥtp m s.t tn*. Edfu V 130,9-131,3; Alliot, 1979b, p. 503-504.

¹¹³ Literally “corpses”.

¹¹⁴ Chassinat, 1892, p. 173; Partial transliteration and translation in Alliot, 1979b, p. 514.

¹¹⁵ Esna 206,12-13.

¹¹⁶ Sauneron, 1962, p. 269.

were buried in the divine necropolis of *pr-ntr*, located north of the temple. A chapel dedicated to Osiris and Isis and a body of water used for ritual sailing in particular occasion were part of the site, along with the mound housing the corpses of the ancestor deities¹¹⁷. Rests preserved near the modern city of Kom Senun are perhaps to be interpreted as the remains of this holy site¹¹⁸. The designation of *pr-ntr* in a text from Esna indeed is the “secret place of the primeval gods, the great utterances of the first time¹¹⁹”.

However, *pr-ntr* belonged to the subsidiary structures and holy places in the neighborhood of Esna, where part of the ceremonies took place, as listed in the festival calendar¹²⁰.

Passages from the texts of the temple of Khnum at Esna mention this burial place in connection with the offering rituals performed there on the 19th day of third month of Shemu (Epiphi)¹²¹.

Esna III 197,24-197,25

*dw3.t nty im dw3.t st3.t pw nt km-3.t-f
hn 'šw tfnet tm nty hts hn '-sn*

The Duat in it, it is the secret Duat of Kematef, with Shu, Tefnut, and Atum who is buried with them.

imht pw nty htp.tiw

It is the region of the Netherworld in which are the ones at rest,

*d3is.w 7 nw mh.t-wr.t...*¹²²

the seven utterances of Mehet-Weret.

The necropolis is also mentioned in 196,2 having almost the same appellation. What actually interests us is the mention of it as the “cavern of the resting ones (*htp.tiw*)”, namely the dead ancestors. The epithet also occurs in 196,10.

Sadly, the texts of Esna are not very eloquent about such gods. Opposite to the inscriptions from Edfu and Thebes quoted above, Esna never refers to the ascent to the sky of its ancestor, and does not mention their embalming either. Allusion to their passing by means of alternative euphemism are lacking as well. However, we can assume that more text dealing with them should have existed.

¹¹⁷ Sauneron, 1983, p. 21.

¹¹⁸ Sauneron, 1962, p. 316, note 1, correcting his previous affirmations.

¹¹⁹ [III, 196,2] *s.t st3.t n ntr.w p3w.tiw d3is.w '3 n p3w.ty-tpy*.

¹²⁰ Esna 55 and 77.

¹²¹ Esna 197,21-26.

¹²² Translation in Sauneron, 1962, p. 351-352; Emerit, 2002, p. 191-192.

8.4. Summary cross references

The cult of ancestor gods was a widespread phenomenon in the Ptolemaic Period. In this chapter we have analyzed the examples offered by the Ogdoad in Thebes, the Ennead of Edfu, and the primeval gods of Esna. Their death was conceived as real as demonstrated by the offering rituals performed in their burial places. Their passing is described as ascension to the sky, a euphemistic expression which has a really old origin. However, in the case of the seven primeval gods of Esna this metaphor is lacking but this might actually be just the consequence of the bad state of preservation of the temple itself, of which only the hypostyle hall remains. More commonly, however, the dead ancestor gods are referred to as gods at rest.

On the other side, sources designate them also as living ones. A common epithet for the ancestor gods of the kind indeed is “living ba”. Next to this, for instance, the Ogdoad, despite completing its time, is referred to as “the gods at rest” (*hp.tiw*¹²³) who continue living in the Mound of Djeme¹²⁴, a place which was located in the temple of Medinet Habu and which was believed to enclose their tomb. Similarly they are said to live forever, not knowing destruction. This is actually a reference to the so-called “second death”, which is exorcised. As a matter of fact, such ancestor gods have died and are now buried in tombs, but thanks to the funerary offerings offered them and to the embalming process that they had performed on them, they will never cease to exist in the afterlife. Likewise, they will never suffer total destruction, namely the terrible faith represented by “second death”.

¹²³ It could also mean “the blessed dead”, denomination of the ones who are provided with offerings.

¹²⁴ *hp.tiw 'nh.w m i3.t-d3w.t*; McClain, 2011, p. 76, fig. 5.8, line 3.

CHAPTER 9

HORUS¹

9.1. Horus the Child described as if dead

The example of Horus the Child is different from the ones we have dealt with throughout this investigation. As a matter of fact, he never died, yet magical text pretends that he almost did. Indeed, it was a common practice for magical papyri to describe suffering gods. This particular kind of text, conceived for magical purposes and as a medium of healing, deals actually with mythical and imaginary episodes concerning various gods and their sorrows. They are said to suffer from some kind of disease, representing thus a magical antecedent for the magician's patient, who is exactly experiencing the same pain that a named god suffered before him. Hence, by means of remedies and magical formulae which had functioned for the concerned god, the magician was able to successfully heal his patient. Such spells are numerous and involve, among others, Ra, Isis and Horus, suffering of headache, stomachache, burn, poisoning and birthing pains, etc.² Contrary to the other deities, not only is Horus portrayed as a god who is in agony because of scorpion or snake venom, but he also is described as if he were actually dead.

The narration of this episode is reported on a wide number of stelae which are part of a category of object called Horus stelae or cippi of Horus³. Very small versions, consisting in round-topped plaques, were worn as amulets to protect its owner from dangerous creatures. They are inscribed with hieroglyphs and also present the relief of Horus, frontally portrayed as a child who has the sidelock of youth. He is standing on

¹ On Horus in the *Pyramid Texts* see Allen (1916) and on his polysemic theonym in the same composition see the study by Mathieu (2013), which also cites bibliographical references divided into categories. In his aspect of legitimate successor of the Osiris, Horus is embodied by the king; the connection between the two is investigated in passages of Frankfort (1948, in particular p. 36-47). The figure of Horus the Behdetite has been discussed in Gardiner (1944) and recently in an extensive dissertation by Shonkwiler (2014), starting from the Old Kingdom to the beginning of the Ptolemaic Period. Horus the Child, venerated in the Graeco-Roman Period with the Greek name Harpokrates as an independent deity, is mentioned as early as the Old Kingdom; a recent study entirely dedicated to him is Sandri (2006).

² Exemplificative collections of this kind of text are given in Borghouts, 1978; Bardinet, 1995; and Leitz, 1999.

³ A preliminary catalogue is given by Sternberg-el-Hotabi, 1994. The most complete study on the subject is Sternberg-el-Hotabi, 1999.

crocodiles⁴, indicating his power over dangerous creatures, and holds in his hands serpents, scorpions, oryxes, and lions, all of which considered to be malign animals. Both inscription and depiction invoked the god's domination over such creatures and the god's consequent protection from them. They are a typical aspect of the Late Period religion, circulating during the Third Intermediate Period and reaching the climax of their diffusion in the Graeco-Roman Period. Only a few Horus stelae have been dated certainly⁵, though the oldest examples are found as early as the XXII and XXV Dynasties⁶. Whereas small stelae used to be worn as amulets, the biggest, almost reaching one meter in height and common in the early phases 1 and 2, were donated to temples and located in courts. They had consequently a public character. Such big stelae indeed used to stand on bases with channels and basins carved out in their upper surface to collect water. As a matter of fact, water was poured over the monument in order to provide it with magical powers. This purpose was achieved by means of the contact of the water with the formulae inscribed on the stela's and basis's surface. When drunk by the sufferer, the water poured over the stela was supposed to work as medication⁷. On the contrary, the stelae which had an intermediate dimension were kept in domestic chapels or carried along during journeys for protection⁸. However, even the small ones differ noticeably in size, material, quality of workmanship, as well as in the arrangement of texts and, in the case of the finest examples of the cippi, also vignettes⁹.

The inscriptions found on such objects belong to the corpus of magical texts of the New Kingdom but might possibly be earlier. Among the most diffused spells, Daressy identified, two main texts, which he called A and B¹⁰. More recently a third one (text C) has been added to them¹¹. They deal with the cycle of rejuvenation of Ra-Osiris

⁴ This class of stelae has indeed been firstly named "stele d'Horus sur les crocodiles" by Chabas (1868). This name is concise but extremely reductive since the spells engraved on such monuments actually deal with snake bites and scorpion stung more than with crocodiles. Nonetheless, they were meant to work as a protection against all kind of dangerous animal and consequently against evil forces in general.

⁵ Sternberg-el-Hotabi (1999) analyzed 433 Horus stelae and dated almost 300 of them, even though some of them only approximately. Subsequently, he divided them in different phases, starting from the XVIII-XIX Dynasty evidence up to roman and renaissance copies.

⁶ Sternberg-el-Hotabi, 1987, p. 27.

⁷ Lacau (1921) discussed this aspect in connection with the statue of Djedher-the-saviour along with two additional monuments in the Cairo Museum.

⁸ Sternberg-El Hotabi, 1999, p. 11-12.

⁹ Also in this regard, the finest example is the Metternich stela. All sides of its surface are indeed covered with almost hundred images of protective deities arranged in horizontal registers. A detailed analysis of the gods' depictions is given in Sternberg-El Hotabi, 1987.

¹⁰ Daressy, 1903, p. 2 and, 8 respectively.

¹¹ The text has been classified thus by Jacquet-Gordon (1965-1966) after the stela Brooklyn 60.73 of unknown provenance and dated to the III century BC. Up to now, some twenty versions of text C are known. The most completed one is found on a stela of the type of Horus on the crocodiles which, on the

and, in an early phase, inscriptions were in close connection with the relief engraved on the front face. In this way, the morning rebirth of the sun became one with the triumph of Horus over dangerous forces¹². However larger examples, as the Metternich Stela, carry extensive collections of utterances.

The tradition of protection spells against snakes and scorpions, however, is much older and goes back to the *Pyramid Texts* of the V and VI Dynasties. Nevertheless, the earliest examples of such incantations are completely different, just consisting of very brief formulae, characterized by alliterations, whose power was employed by the magician to repel the enemy. In this case, when gods were invoked, it was simply to allude to their strength but not to recall any anecdote, contrarily to the mythological narration of the youth of Horus inscribed of the Metternich Stela¹³. This kind of narration in the context of protection spells makes it appearance in the New Kingdom, functioning as a successful antecedent of healing¹⁴.

The finest examples of this type of spells' collection are the Tyszkiewicz statue¹⁵, the Klasens statue base¹⁶, the statue of Djedher-the-savior¹⁷, and the Metternich stela (MMA 50.85). As for the statue of Djedher-the-saviour, it consists of the sculpture of a seated man with his arms crossed and resting on his knees – in accordance with the type of block statue – and in a smaller stela of the cippi of Horus kind placed before his legs. The two elements are carved out of the same block of material. The statue basement's has a hollow carved in its surface aimed at collecting the water was purred on. Also Djedher's garments and his wig are covered with inscription, whereas on his arms figures of deities are carved¹⁸.

The Metternich stela dates back to the reign of Nectanebo II¹⁹. Linguistic characteristics show that the spells was meant to be recited. The long text engraved on

basis of its iconography, is supposed to date bak to the beginning of the Ptolemaic Period. For its latest edition and references see Gasse, 2004.

¹² Sternberg-El Hotabi, 1999, p. 8-9.

¹³ PT 378 (§ 663b) narrates how Horus trod (*hnd*) on a dangerous serpent. The episode also occurs in other charms against snakes (PT 240, PT 299, PT 388) but, unlike them, PT 378 (§ 663c) describes the god as a young child with his finger to the mouth (*hrd nhn db 'f m rz-f*). However, in such instances, Horus defeats the snake, not vice versa.

¹⁴ Moret, 1915, p. 283-284.

¹⁵ Edited by Lefebvre, 1931.

¹⁶ Edited by Klasens, 1952.

¹⁷ The first edition is by Daressy, 1919, a later one is Jelínková-Reymond, 1956.

¹⁸ Jelínková-Reymond, 1956, p. 1-2.

¹⁹ Scott, 1951, p. 201.

its surface has been divided into different parts²⁰. The one this paper is dealing with is part XIV. The episode, as recorded on this monument, is the most complete account of the myth and this version is possibly the least corrupted one, even though presenting some obscure passages²¹.

Spell XIV (lines 168-251) is recorded as a speech in the first person uttered by Isis. The goddess narrates how Horus was born secretly among the papyri of the Delta and how one day she found her son lifeless²². Indeed, she found out that Horus had been stung during her absence. She she tried to revive him, but everything she did was useless and so she cried out for help. The marsh-dwellers rushed to her but no one was able to to anything to save Horus. However, one of the women reassured the Isis, explaining her that her evil brother Seth could not enter the Delta. Consequently, the suffering of her child was not caused by Seth but by a scorpion (*d3r.t*) which stung (*ddm*) him or by a greedy snake (*'wt-ib*) which bit (*hwn*) him. Isis smelled the breath of Horus and realized that the woman was wright. She called Ra, saying that his son had been stung. She listed the child's epithets but she did not manage to heal him. Nephthys and Serkis heard her screams and came to her. Then, the Bark of Millions stopped and Thoth finally descended from heaven. Horus's weakness had indeed caused the upheaval of world's order²³, stopping the sun god's boat, and causing the Nile no longer to flow and vegetation to wither. By means of his words of magic, Thoth drove the poison out of Horus's limbs and healed him. Subsequently, the universe came back to his order. As well as Horus recovered, so would the sufferer likewise.

The idea at the base of this kind of text indeed is that men bitten by snakes or stung by scorpions used to identify themselves with a certain god – Horus in this case – and, in the same way in which the god was healed and survived, so would they live. The necessity of this is found in the fact that powerful gods such as Ra and Thoth would not have bothered for a common mortal man, but would have cared for a god instead. The choice of Horus likely appeared to the magician as the perfect one since in more close

²⁰ The texts' division is that firstly made by Golenisheff in 1877, it being the first edition of the stela with authoritative drawings of the objects. The division of the last part has been changed by Drioton (1928-29). The now preferred array is that by Sander-Hansen (1956). The texts is thus to be read as follows: front face (lines 1-37), base (lines 167-251), left side (lines 89-125), right side (lines 126-162), back side (lines 38-88); the dedication in lines 87-88 is the consequent conclusion of the arrangement. A clear and schematic arrangement, showing the disposition of both reliefs and hieroglyphic texts, is given in Moret, 1915, p. 216.

²¹ Scott, 1951, p. 205.

²² Part VI too deals with the account of the infancy of Horus.

²³ Menaces by the magician to subvert the cosmic order are common in magical texts. In this case, it is indeed said that the solar bark will not be allowed to proceed until Horus is healed.

connection with humankind, being the child god described as an innocent kid (*swg3*), an image with which people surely felt more comfortable with²⁴. Nevertheless, the child god figure appeared only in a later time.

The accurate physical description of the motionless Horus is found in lines 169-172. Such a dramatic and detailed portrayal is justified only by the fact that the young god is not dead but simply unconscious. The previous idea that Horus actually died has in fact been rejected. Supporters of the first interpretation, asserting that Horus was killed by the scorpion venom and resurrected by Thoth, were, for instance, Budge²⁵ and Moret²⁶. The stela actually never reads that he is dead. However, even though he really died, the text would never admit it. Besides, the description of his physical conditions supports the second interpretation instead of the one which wants him dead.

Metternich stela

{...} 'n.t r <i>shn</i> ²⁷ <i>hr</i>	{...} After coming back to look for Horus,
[170] <i>gm-n-(i) s(w) hr nfr nbw hrd swg</i>	I found him, Horus, the beautiful and
<i>iw.tt it</i>	golden, a child immature and without a
	father,
<i>ntf-n-f idb.w m mw n.w ir.t-f m ntt n.w</i>	while he was wetting the banks with the
<i>sp.ty-f</i>	water of his eyes and with the spittle of his
	lips,
<i>d.t-f wrd ib-f bdš iw.ti p3 mtw n.w h'.w-</i>	while his body was inert and his heart weak,
<i>f</i> ²⁸	and without the (pulsing) of the veins of his
	body.

As the text goes on, we are informed that the child was too weak to answer and too feeble to accept food and water even though he needed them. The loss of strength is a well-known symptom of snake bite, but intense thirst too is an effect of the poison of vipers²⁹. Moreover, if we also compare the other symptoms experienced by Horus with the one caused by poison – in particular that of elapidae which is neuro-toxic – we will find many correspondences. The effects caused by this kind of venom – recorded by the Ancient Egyptians in the XXX Dynasty ophiology treaty (Brooklyn 47.218.48 and

²⁴ On gods as protectors and victims see Moret, 1915, p. 276-282.

²⁵ Budge, 1912, p. 68-79.

²⁶ Moret, 1915.

²⁷ According to the context, the sign is to read *shn* “to search” and not *hpt* “to embrace”.

²⁸ Transliteration based on Sander-Hansen, 1956, p. 60-61.

²⁹ Cf. the effects described in the ophiology treaty edited by Sauneron, 1989. On snakes symptoms see Sauneron, 1989, p. 173-179, on thirst p. 117.

47.218.85) edited by Sauneron – are paralysis, dyspnea, heart weakness, aphasia. To them local pain and salivation should be added³⁰. All of these symptoms are described – or at least implied – in the myth, not mitigated by reserve just because dealing with a god.

At present, scholars tend to interpret the myth as the account of a rescue rather than of a proper resurrection³¹. Nevertheless, a few passages are particularly interesting from this point of view since they apparently describe Horus as dead. Lines 205-206 report the menace that the sun boat would be impeded its journey in the daily sky for as long as Horus was lifeless. The stop of the solar bark was actually necessary to have the gods rushing to the victim's help³². Motionless and feeble, Horus the child is said to be lying on his side (*hr gs-f*), an expression traditionally used as a euphemism of death and employed in reference to Osiris in particular³³.

*nn n' wīz n-r' [206] r s3 hr hr gs-f*³⁴

The bark of Ra will not travel as long as the Horus child³⁵ in on his side.

The image of someone lying on his side recalls indeed the idea of inertia, sleep, and, consequently, death. However, the two cases are different, since, with reference to Osiris, the expression is to be considered as a euphemism, whereas while referred to Horus it has to be interpreted literally. As a matter of fact, he is motionless and too weak to move as a consequence of the venom in his body. Nevertheless, in further instances, the text also stresses the fact that Horus the child is like dead. This statement is actually not surprising since, in this kind of spell, the victim, unconscious because of the acting venom, is often compared to a dead person³⁶.

In line 191 the element used to diagnose Horus illness is the smell of his breath.

³⁰ Cf. Sauneron, 1989, p. 178-179.

³¹ Scott (1951, p. 213) and Nunn (1996, p. 110) define Horus as “unconscious”; Ritner describes him as “injured” (1993, p. 57, note 266); Pinch (1994, p. 144-145) writes of “sickness” caused by the poison and that Thoth comes to heaven to “revive” Horus; similarly, Teeter (2011, p. 175) explains that “Isis and Thoth cure Horus”; also Allen (2005b, p. 51) writes that “Thoth healed the injured Horus” and Dorman (p. 80) that the stela recounts the “young god’s cure of poisonous bites by the god Thoth”.

³² On disease and cosmic calamities in the Metternich stela see Assmann, 2003, p. 283-284.

³³ See p. 93-98.

³⁴ Transliteration based on Sander-Hansen, 1956, p. 64.

³⁵ Literally “the son”.

³⁶ Jelínková-Reymond, 1956, p. 42, note 6.

<p>[191] <i>rdi.t n s.t fnd-s m rz-f hr rh sti irw</i> <i>m-(h)nw n hn-f</i></p> <p><i>wp-s mn n iw 'w ntr gm-n-s hr mtw.t</i>³⁸</p>	<p>When Isis put her nose on his mouth to know the smell of it from the inside of his body³⁷, she discovered the illness of the god's heir, having found (him) subjected to poison.</p>
--	---

A further element supporting the fact that Horus is not properly killed essentially is the identification of the sufferer himself with the god. As a matter of fact, the victim of snake or scorpion is necessarily still alive while praying the gods for healing and, since the tale of Horus has been conceived as the mythological antecedent, it makes much more sense to imagine the child god simply unconscious. On the contrary, if he were actually dead and consequently resurrected by Thot, the sufferer would have never expected the incantation to work on him, because he knew very well that once killed by the venom no one would have ever brought him back to life. The sufferer demanded in fact to have the poison removed from his limbs and to be healed, not to be literally resurrected, something that he was conscious to be impossible.

9.2. The wrongly-presumed death of Horus

A much later tradition about a possible death of Horus is reported by Diodorus. In book I he writes about Isis and her powers as a formidable magician, which led her to find great delight in the healing of people. The author also explains that she was believed to have found a drug giving immortality. According to Diodorus, by mean of such preparation not only did Isis bring her dead son Horus – killed by whose whom Diodorus calls Titans – back to life, but she also made him immortal³⁹. In this regard, it is interesting that the body of Horus is said to have been found underwater. Now,

³⁷ Sander-Hansen understands this passage as a comparison between Horus's breath and the smell of a corpse. He translates: "Nachdem Isis ihre Nase an seinen Mund gelegt hatte und daran Geruch eines in seinem Sarge (liegenden) erkannte, stellte sie das Leiden des göttlichen Erbens fest..." (1956, p. 71). As for this, the texts recorded on the cippi of Horus actually emphasize the concept of breathing with regard to shortness of breath as a symptom of snake bite and scorpion sting. This idea is also found in the dedicatory inscription of priest Nesu-Atum, in which he explains that the stela was indeed partly commissioned with the aim to "give air to the suffocating" (cf. Teeter, 2001, p. 175).

³⁸ Transliteration based on Sander-Hansen, 1956, p. 63.

³⁹ The concerned passage (I,25) reads: "Furthermore, she discovered also the drug which gives immortality, by means of which she not only raised from the dead her son Horus, who had been the object of plots on the part of Titans and had been found dead under the water, giving him his soul again, but also made him immortal" (Diodorus I, 25; Oldfather, 1933, p. 82-83).

Moret⁴⁰ connected this statement to a passage from the Metternich stela which he actually misunderstood. He wrote that, so far as he knew, the concerned passage was the only acknowledged allusion to Horus's drowning throughout ancient Egyptian sources⁴¹. This speculation derives from the wrong translation of lines 201-202⁴². It consists in an extract of spell XIV of the stela and deals with Isis's invocation of Ra in particular. In those lines she repeats as a litany that her son has been stung.

- [201] *psh hr sn-n-i hr m33-f mr-n-i* Horus was bitten/stung and I hurried at his sight,
'nh n ib-f for whose heart I wished to live⁴³.
 [202] *'wn swg hr mh dgm id.w*⁴⁴ as he mourned over the drowned one (i.e. Osiris)
 and those around the child are powerless⁴⁵.

Moreover, Moret wrote that Horus was thrown in the water after being dismembered by Seth, just like his father Osiris⁴⁶. An older tradition about the dismemberment of Horus does actually survive, but the mutilation of the god's body referred to by Moret is not directly performed by Seth⁴⁷. Besides, the concerned text obviously never mentions a possible death of Horus. The event referred to by the French

⁴⁰ 1915, p. 235-237.

⁴¹ He writes: "D'autre part, sur la fin du récit, le texte constate qu'Horus est noyé; donc il a été jeté au Nil par Seth comme son père Osiris. À ma connaissance notre texte est le seul connu jusqu'ici, qui définit d'un terme précis la noyade d'Horus nous devons donc l'apporter, comme argument essentiel, à la démonstration construite par Lefébure avec d'autres textes (qui procèdent par allusions voilées), de ce fait très important au point de vue mythique, qu'Horus, comme Osiris, avait été démembré et jeté au Nil" (Moret, 1915, p. 236-237). He cites then Plutarch (*De Iside et Osiride*, 55 and 65) as an evidence of Horus's presumed dismemberment and Diodorus (I, 25) for the findings of the body of Horus in the water. The mention of Lefébure (1874, p. 32-42, 63 and 71) is in reference to spell CXIII of the *Book of the Dead*, dealing with the finding of the limbs of Horus in the Nile.

⁴² He translates the verses as follows: "L'innocent a eu le malheur (202) de se noyer et les compagnons de l'enfant sont sans force..." (1915, p. 235).

⁴³ Borghouts translates the first line: "Horus has been bitten, the one whom I eagerly awaited (*sn*) to see, and for whose benefit I lived life!" (1978, p. 64).

⁴⁴ Transliteration based on Sander-Hansen, 1956, p. 63-64.

⁴⁵ Sander-Hansen translates: "(201) Horus wurde gebissen, auf dessen Anblick ich geachtet habe, und für dessen Herz ich Leben wünschte, (202) als der Unschuldige wegen des Ertrunkenen weinte, und die Wärter des Kindes kraftlos wurden" (1956, p. 71).

⁴⁶ Moret, 1915, p. 236-237, extensively quoted in note 41.

⁴⁷ Of course narrations about the injuries inflicted to Horus by his father's evil brother are well-known and extremely numerous. Indeed, they are a main element in the context of the Osirian myth, in which the struggle between the two of them is a key moment. During the fight both of them are said to rip pieces of the opponent's body. References to this are as old as the myth of Osiris itself and are already very numerous in the *Pyramid Texts* where many different bodily parts are involved. The most famous are of course the eye of Horus (*wḏj.t*) and Seth's testicles, the former's counterpart. The removal of Horus eyes at the hands of Seth is recorded in particular in a passage *the Contendings of Horus and Seth*: the evil god is said to have found the legitimate heir of his brother while Horus resting under a *shenusha*-tree, to have removed his eyes from their place, and to have buried them on the mountain. This caused the eyeballs to turn into bulbs and grow into lotuses. As for Horus, he was healed by Hathor who put the milk of a gazelle in his ocular orbits and hence restored both his eyes (pChester Beatty I, 10,2-10,11).

Egyptologist actually concerns the wound of Horus's hands. This event is narrated both in *the Contendings of Horus and Seth* and in BD 113, as well as in its earlier Middle Kingdom version (CT 158). The former describes the fact, reading that Isis cut off Horus's hands, since they were contaminated and thus made impious by Seth's semen, and that she threw them into the Nile. Hence, there is actually no murder attempt behind this, but, on the contrary, just the willingness to heal the god. In addition, both the two funerary spells insist on the fact that it is actually Isis herself who cuts off her son's hands, reading it once in BD 113 and twice in CT 158. The hands, once tossed in the river, are found by Sobek⁴⁸, as ordered him by Ra, and then grown back in their proper place by Isis.

9.3. Summary and cross references

So, end of the digression, the myth of the infancy of Horus, even though not properly dealing with the god's death, still gives us important information on this matter. As a matter of fact, Horus is not actually dead but only almost fictitiously killed by venom. Considered the nature of such magical text, the god's death would actually have proven to be counterproductive. As a matter of fact, since the myth worked as mythical antecedent, the sufferer for whom the spell was recited expected to be healed, not resurrected. However, the possible consequences of divine death are suggested and, as the text demonstrates, it would result in the upheaval of cosmic order. This is in marked contrast to the death of Apophis, who, on the contrary, must necessarily be killed daily in order to maintain the balance of the universe. If Ra's fight against his enemy were unsuccessful, subsequently resulting in his death, the cosmic order would have been disturbed, just as in the case of Horus the Child's myth. The god's lying still is referred to by means of the expression describing him being on his side (*hr gs-f*), used in particular for Osiris as a dead god and also for Geb being murdered (*di hr gs-f*) according to a myth recorded in the Florence Manual.

⁴⁸ According to this myth, this is how the net was invented, because as Sobek himself explains, Horus's limbs continued slipping from his fingers, obliging him to use a fish trap to catch them.

CONCLUSIONS

The ancient Egyptians acknowledged not only the fact that their gods could suffer death, but even that they experienced it before them. As a matter of fact, the West, realm of the dead, according to the conceptions documented at least from the New Kingdom (BD 17) – but possibly developed even earlier – would have been invented for the gods. Besides, as proved by Ptolemaic Period conceptions, the primeval divine beings who took part in the process of creation of the world completed their lifespan once their creative tasks have been accomplished. Consequently, they left the world of the living in order to dwell eternally in the Duat in their identity of “gods at rest”, not knowing destruction. In this way, their death ideally precedes that of Osiris, being the first traditionally ever occurred. However, this conception developed only secondly. Yet, at the same time, the death of some kind of primordial divine being is actually the first instance that has ever been recorded in ancient Egyptian literature. In this case, however, we are dealing with a completely different kind of death, namely a violent one. Spell PT 273-274 demonstrates indeed that divine death was part of ancient Egyptian literature since its dawn, even preceding the Osirian myth. Such a raw and detailed description of divine death in reference to gods is only found in much later texts dealing with Apophis and Seth, the enemies of the gods. Vivid accounts of the former’s death make their appearance in the New Kingdom and reach their climax in Ptolemaic Period execrations rituals. However, PT 273-274 reveals us that, in the beginning, the ancient Egyptians had no restraint when it came to dealing with the slaughtering of divine beings, who not only were ritually killed, but also consumed by the deceased pharaoh. However, they are never explicitly said to have perished (“second death”). As a matter of fact, the spell is actually more a threat than an actual butcher but the fact that such an account has been written down is equally important, making it somehow concrete. Yet, the disappearance of the composition from funerary literature shows us a change in the perception that the ancient Egyptians had of divine death. The adjustments of the Middle Kingdom version of the spell (CT 573) underline it: the text is unchanged in the meaning, but lacks the brutality of its earlier version, and neither does it show the sacrificial character that it originally had. The *Coffin Texts* still perpetuate the conceptions of feeding on gods in additional spells, even though the

slaughtering for the preparation of the meal constituted by the gods is only occasionally mentioned. The passing of time mitigates this aspect even more, reaching its climax in the *Book of the Dead*, where the consumption of gods is simply implied by means of stating that the deceased lives on them (BD 181 and BD 79 but also the earlier CT 306). In other words, as time passed by, the ancient Egyptians seem to have felt less at ease in dealing with the violent aspect of divine death. However, in the *Pyramid Texts* euphemistic aspects of divine death are also known, such as the proverbial expression used in regard to human beings, which states that some deities called by their names have gone to their ka (PT 25, PT 447, PT 450, PT 568 and the later CT 821, CT 936 as well as a passage from the Ptolemaic Period *Stundenwachen*). Yet, such spells were actually aimed at reassuring the deceased while passing away.

Besides, in the Old Kingdom the advent of the Osirian myth demanded different ways of handling the issue in order to grant the god his endless afterlife. As a matter of fact, the writing down of the terrible moments of Osiris's assassination would have resulted in the magical and eternal concretization of the event. Consequently, periphrases and euphemistic expressions were employed in order to avoid the direct mention of the murder and of its cruelty. Nonetheless, violent terms are also used and even verbs explicitly meaning "to kill". With time passing by, however, descriptions are mitigated once again, almost disappearing by the time of the New Kingdom. Losing the brutal aspect of the murder of the god, Ptolemaic Period liturgical texts switched their focus to the aspect of the resurrection of Osiris, already fundamental in the Old Kingdom but, at that time, still found next to less veiled allusion to the crime of Seth. Certainly, this must have been connected with the symbolical meaning of the death of Osiris, namely the promise of rebirth, no longer prerogative of the king from the end of the Old Kingdom but gradually enlarging, starting from the royal entourage. Common people probably felt perturbed by the brutal features of the account of the god's murder, which therefore progressively lost that part with the purpose of underlining the god's triumph over death.

So, practically, as time passed by, the violent aspects of divine death left the funerary literature – except for Apophis – in order to be confined to the magical genre of execration rituals. In parallel, despite all of this, the concept of divine death enlarged and included entire groups of deities, who were believed to have descended into the Duat and were consequently offered a funerary cult in necropolis annexed to Ptolemaic Period temples. The possibility that death could affect every god, however, dates back

to much earlier times, possibly to the Middle Kingdom (CT 282), but certainly to the New Kingdom, when texts stated that the West was created for the gods (BD 17) and that human beings and deities equally had to descend into it according to the will of the creator god (*Book of Gates*, *The Contendings of Horus and Seth*). This could be in connection with the aspect of the passing of time, experienced also by divinities others than Ra. This conception might have already been elaborated in the Old Kingdom, when we meet a deity called *nḥḥ* (“the old one”). By the time of the New Kingdom, however, the idea of aging gods is deeply rooted in religious beliefs, resulting in the depiction of Atum as an aged god leaning on his stick. This might also be the reason behind the limited amount of years of reign assigned to the earthly kings’ divine predecessors in the Royal Canon of Turin, in line with the Ptolemaic epithet of “reckoner of time” assigned to Thoth. Yet, the end of the earthly life is explicitly acknowledged to be the cause of the Ogdoad’s death along with Kematef’s, as implied by the latter’s name. Such a faith was likely considered to concern all the gods, and would possibly result in a return to the Nun. The idea of the return of the world to the primordial state preceding creation arose in the Middle Kingdom, but in the Ptolemaic Period is openly related to aging (*Stundenwachen*).

This kind of natural death, opposed to death by violence, had great fortune in the Late Period. In earlier times it regarded three figures in particular, which, apart from Ra, belonged to the contest of the *Coffin Texts*, namely Neper (the god of grain) and *sk-wr* (likely a celestial deity). The conception of their passing was obviously different from Osiris’s, not only because it was not due to violence, but mostly because it was real. The ancient Egyptians could actually witness firsthand their “decease”: they saw the sun set every evening in the West, crops die in the dry season, stars disappearing from the night sky. Yet, they rose every morning, grew back after the inundation, and reappeared among the other stars. This phenomenon of cyclical death and rebirth was consequently attributed to the deities who represented such elements.

In general terms, the reason justifying divine death is the promise of rebirth offered by gods’ myths. Examples of this are of course the two opposed models of Ra, who dies and is reborn daily, and Osiris, who through his death reached a new phase of existence, eternal and never resulting in the end of his being, but yet confined to the Netherworld. Similarly, the fact that gods had experienced death functioned as a model for the deceased, as shown in the *Pyramid* and *Coffin Texts* utterances dealing with god’s going to their kas. At the same time, this also justified the pharaoh’s death, just

like the later *Myth of the Heavenly Cow*, which ascribed Ra's withdrawal to the sky (i.e. death) essentially to his old age. In such instances, in practice, divine death was created theoretically, whereas in the account on the Naos of Ismailia the divine characters saying to have died likely embody earthly pharaohs in a mythological transposition of the political events of the period.

On the contrary, the deaths of Seth and Apophis had a completely different meaning. They had to be fought and defeated, in order to maintain cosmic balance and, even though ideally condemned to "second death", they could not suffer it, since it was necessary for them to come back and be fought again. In the case of execration ritual, their massacre, ideally resulting in death, symbolized the annihilation of the pharaoh's enemies. Consequently to all of this, no ancient Egyptian god ever suffered "second death".

In regard to resurrection – apart from the instances of Ra and Osiris already explained above – only one actual case of death and proper return to life is attested in the Late or Ptolemaic Period. The protagonist of the account is Geb, killed by Shu for acting against him but then brought back to life by means of the Shu's vivifying breath. Yet, this event must have had some meaning in the ritual context the papyrus belonged to.

As for the grammar forms employed in regard to the event that resulted in violent death, stative forms are recurrent and are often combined with euphemistic verbs like *ḥr* ("to fall"), attested for Osiris in the *Pyramid Texts* but standard for Apophis or Seth in the later literature. Consequently, the emphasis is given on the status of being in which the god is at the moment, rather than on the action itself, which is just implied by the stative. In other instances, for example describing tortures inflicted to Apophis or in regard to events connected with the murder of Osiris, *sdm-n-f* forms are recurrent as well. In this case, they denote completed actions and consequently testify that the gods' deceases were perceived as real. As for Ra, the *sdm-f* form along with pseudoverbal construction is customary, the latter being atemporal and also indicating a statement of fact.

The use of the verb *mwt* ("to die") is attested for Osiris and Ra even in close association with their names. On the contrary, in the instances of Apophis and Seth this only occurs when their name is not clearly mentioned. If they were actually identified as dead (*mwt.w*), the magic power of the written word would have caused them to be annihilated indeed, compromising cosmic order. Similarly, they are depicted in

figurative sources while struck but not as dead beings, in clear opposition to Osiris. He, on the contrary, is always portrayed as mummified, i.e. dead but alive in the Netherworld, or, as in the reliefs from the Graeco-Roman temple of Dendera, lying on a funerary bed and waiting for his resurrection which is achieved by means of the rituals performed in the temple.

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 1. Sandston relief (British Museum EA 55336) from the Tomb of Amenemhat (TT 163) depicting the four sons of Horus offering the deceased his heart, ba, ka, and body 10
- Figure 2. Relief of Osiris lying on the funerary bed as a mummiform figure from the lower register of the third Osirian chapel of the Ptolemaic temple of Dendera. Isis and Nephthys are at his feet and head respectively, protecting him..... 84
- Figure 3. The stela of Amenmose (Louvre C 286) on which the Great Hymn to Osiris, the most complete ancient Egyptian account of the Osirian myth, is inscribed 90
- Figure 4. Vignette from a coffin in the Rijks-Museum (Leiden), labelling Nut's mouth as "the West" and her vulva as "the East" 146
- Figure 5. Drawing of the ceiling of the burial chamber of Ramesses IX's tomb in the Valley of the Kings (KV 6), depicting the sky goddess Nut twice. Her double representation as a naked woman arched back-to-back over the ground symbolizes the night (*Book of the Night*, left-hand figure) and day sky (*Book of the Day*, right-hand figure). The twelve-hour journey of the sun god through the sky is represented by means of twelve sun disks in Nut's body..... 149
- Figure 6. Vignette from the fourth section of the *Book of Caverns* from the tomb of Ramesses VI in the Valley of the Kings (KV 9). In the middle register the ram-headed god Atum is depicted while leaning on a staff opposite of three forms of Osiris. The upper register shows Osiris lifted by Isis and Nephthys in preparation for his resurrection along with the care for him by Anubis and Horus. The lower register represents the punishment of the enemies 153
- Figure 7. Vignette from the seventh hour of the Amduat. In the middle register Apophis, in front of the solar bark, is depicted tied and with knives cutting through his body... 179
- Figure 8. Vignette from chapter BD 17 from the XIX Dynasty papyrus of Hunefer, depicting the cat while cutting through Apophis's head with a knife 194
- Figure 9. Vignette from the XXI Dynasty papyrus of Her-Uben B, depicting Seth at the prow of the solar bark while piercing Apophis with his spear 195
- Figure 10. Vignette from the middle register of the sixth division of the *Book of Gates* depicting the twelve heads of those whom Apophis has swallowed rising from the serpent's body..... 198

Figure 11. Relief from the west wall of the inner face of the enclosing wall of the Edfu temple. It consists in the first scene of act III and shows Horus harpooning Seth in the form of hippopotamus216

Figure 12. Relief from the west wall of the inner face of the enclosing wall of the Edfu temple. It consists in the interlude of act III and shows the dismemberment of Seth in form of hippopotamus217

Figure 13. Relief from the propylon of the temple of Khonsu (Bab el-Amara), western interior face, northern jamb, fifth register, depicting king Ptolemy III Euergetes performing acts of libation and censuring before Amun and Amaunet (upper register) and Nun and Naunet (lower register), all of which are depicted in anthropomorphic form 241

Figure 14. Relief from the propylon of the temple of Khonsu (Bab el-Amara), eastern interior face, northern jamb, fifth register, depicting king Ptolemy III Euergetes performing acts of libation and censuring before Heh and Hauhet (upper register) and Kek and Kauket (lower register), all of which are depicted in anthropomorphic form.....246

LIST OF SYMBOLS

The following symbols are used in transliterations and translations:

- () in the transliteration encloses a sign or group of signs omitted in the original, but understood to be present. In the translation denotes an English word or words supplied by the translator to make out the sense or a brief explanation provided by the translator.
- [] restored passage lost in the original text but believed to have been present originally
- [...] lacunae.
- ... in the translation indicates untranslatable word or words.
- {...} personal omission of a passage of the original text.
- < > material actually present in the text but considered erroneous or superfluous.
- (?) uncertain reading of a word in the original text or uncertain translation of a word.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bibliographical abbreviations

AeUL	<i>Ägypten und Levante/ Egypt and the Levant</i> , Wien.
ASAE	<i>Annales du service des antiquités de l'Égypte</i> , Cairo.
ASR	<i>Annuaire de l'École pratique des hautes études (EPHE), Section des sciences religieuses</i> .
BES	<i>Bulletin of the Egyptological Seminar</i> , New York.
BIFAO	<i>Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale</i> , Cairo.
BMMA	<i>Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MMA)</i> , New York.
BRL	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i> , Manchester.
BSFE	<i>Bulletin de la Société française d'Égyptologie</i> , Paris.
CdE	<i>Chronique d'Égypte</i> , Bruxelles.
ENiM	<i>Égypte nilotique et méditerranéenne</i> .
FCD	FAULKNER Raymond O. (1976), <i>A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian</i> , Oxford: Oxford University Press.
GM	<i>Göttinger Miszellen</i> , Göttingen.
JARCE	<i>Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt</i> , Boston/Princeton/New York/Cairo.
JEA	<i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</i> , London.
JEOL	<i>Jaarbericht van het Vooraziatisch-egyptisch Genootschap Ex Oriente Lux</i> , Leiden.
JES	<i>The Journal of Egyptological Studies</i> , Sofia, Bulgaria.
JESHO	<i>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</i> , Leiden.
JSSEA	<i>Journal of the Society of the Studies of Egyptian Antiquities</i> , Toronto.
Kêmi	<i>Kêmi: Revue de philologie et d'archéologie égyptienne et coptes</i> , Paris.
LÄ	<i>Lexikon der Ägyptologie</i> .

LGG	LEITZ Christian (2002-2003), <i>Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen</i> , 8 Volumes, Leuven: Peeters.
LingAeg	<i>Lingua Aegyptia. Journal of Egyptian Language Studies</i> , Göttingen.
MMAF	<i>Mémoires publiés par les membres de la mission archéologique française au Caire</i> , Paris.
NAWG	<i>Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse</i> , Göttingen.
OMRO	<i>Oudheidkundige Mededelingen uit het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden</i> , Leiden
Or	<i>Orientalia</i> , Rome.
RdE	<i>Revue d'Égyptologie</i> , Paris.
REA	<i>Revue de l'Égypte ancienne</i> , Paris.
RHR	<i>Revue de l'histoire des religions</i> , Paris.
RT	<i>Recueil de travaux relatifs à la philologie et à l'archéologie égyptiennes et assyriennes</i> , Paris.
SAK Bh	<i>Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur – Beihefte</i>
SAK	<i>Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur</i>
SEAP	<i>Studi di egittologia e antichità puniche</i> , Pisa.
SPAW	<i>Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften</i> , Berlin.
TLA	<i>Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae</i>
TSBA	<i>Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archeology</i> , London.
Wb	<i>Wörterbuch der Ägyptischen Sprache</i> im Auftrage der deutschen Akademien hrsg. von Adolf Erman und Hermann Grapow, 5 Volumes.
WdO	<i>Die Welt des Orient: Wissenschaftliche Beiträge zur Kunde des Morgenlandes</i> , Göttingen.
ZÄS	<i>Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde</i> , Berlin/Leipzig.

ALLEN James P. (2001), *Ba*, in REDFORD Donald B. (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, Vol. I, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 161-162.

ALLEN James P. (2001b), *Shadow*, in in REDFORD Donald B. (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, Vol. III, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 277-278.

- ALLEN James P. (2003), *The Egyptian Concept of the World*, in O'CONNOR David, QUIRKE Stephen (eds.), *Mysterious Lands*, London: UCL Press.
- ALLEN James P. (2005), *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature.
- ALLEN James P. (2005b), *The Art of Medicine in Ancient Egypt*, New Haven, London: Yale University Press, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- ALLEN James P. (2010²), *Middle Egyptian. An Introduction to the Language and Culture of Hieroglyphs*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- ALLEN James P. (2011), *The Debate between a Man and His Soul: A Masterpiece of Ancient Egyptian Literature*, Leiden: Brill.
- ALLEN James P. (2013), *The Name of Osiris (and Isis)*, in *LingAeg* 21, p. 9-14.
- ALLEN Thomas G. (1916), *Horus in the Pyramid Texts*, Chicago: A private edition distributed by the University of Chicago libraries.
- ALLEN Thomas G. (1949), *Some Egyptian Solar hymns*, in *JNES* 8/4, p. 349-355.
- ALLEN Thomas G. (1950), *Occurrences of Pyramid Texts with Cross Indexes of These and Other Egyptian Mortuary Texts*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- ALLEN Thomas G. (1952), *Additions to the Egyptian Book of the Dead*, in *JNES* 11/3, p. 177-186.
- ALLEN Thomas G. (1974), *The Book of the Dead or Going Forth by Day: Ideas of the Ancient Egyptians Concerning the Hereafter as Expressed in Their Own Terms*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- ALLIOT Maurice (1979a), *Le culte d'Horus à Edfou au temps des Ptolémées*, Vol. I, Beyrouth: Librairie du Liban.
- ALLIOT Maurice (1979b), *Le culte d'Horus à Edfou au temps des Ptolémées*, Vol. II, Beyrouth: Librairie du Liban.
- ALTENMÜLLER Hartwig (1966), 'Messersee', 'gewundener Wasserlauf und 'Flammensee.' Eine Untersuchung zur Gleichsetzung und Lesung der drei Bereiche, in *ZÄS* 92, p. 86-95.
- ALTENMÜLLER Hartwig (1977), *Bemerkungen zum Kannibalenspruch*, in ASSMANN Jan et. al. (eds.), *Fragen an die altägyptische Literatur. Studien zum Gedenken an Eberhard Otto*, Wiesbaden: Reichert, p. 19-39.
- ALTENMÜLLER Hartwig (1979), *Ein Zauberspruch zum Schutz des Leibes*, in *GM* 33, p. 7-12.
- ALTENMÜLLER Hartwig (1980), *Hu*, in *LÄ* III, cols. 65-68.

AMENTA Alessia (2004), *Some reflections on the "homosexual" intercourse between Horus and Seth*, in GM 199, p. 7-21.

ANTHES Rudolf (1954), *The Original Meaning of M3' hrw*, in JNES 13/1, p. 21-51.

ASSMANN Jan (1969), *Liturgische Lieder an den Sonnengott: Untersuchungen zur altägyptischen Hymnik*, Berlin: Hessling.

ASSMANN Jan (1975), *Ägyptische Hymnen und Gebete*, Zürich: Artemis.

ASSMANN Jan (1979), *Harfnerlied und Horussöhne: Zwei Blöcke aus dem Verschollenen Grab des Bürgermeisters Amenemhēt (Theben nr. 163) im Britischen Museum*, in JEA 65, p. 54-77.

ASSMANN Jan (1983), *Sonnenhymnen in thebanischen Gräber*, Mainz am Rhein: P. von Zabern.

ASSMANN Jan (1992), *Akhanyati's Theology of Light and Time*, in *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities*, Vol. VII, Nr. 4, Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, p. 143-176.

ASSMANN Jan (1995), *Egyptian solar religion in the New Kingdom. Re, Amun and the crisis of polytheism*, London, New York: Kegan Paul International.

ASSMANN Jan (2001), *The Search for God in Ancient Egypt*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press. (Original German Edition, 1984, *Ägypten: Theologie und Frömmigkeit eine früheren Hochkultur*; Berlin, Köln, Mainz: Kohlhammer).

ASSMANN Jan (2003), *Stein und Zeit. Mensch und Gesellschaft im alten Ägypten*, München: Fink.

ASSMANN Jan (2005), *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press. (Original German Edition, 2001, *Tod und Jenseits im Alten Ägypten*, München: C. H. Beck).

ASSMANN Jan (2006), *Der Ka als Double*, in STOICHITA Victor, *Das Double*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, p. 59-78.

AUFRÈRE Sydney H. (1991), *L'Univers minéral dans la pensée égyptienne*, Le Caire: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale.

BABRY H. S. K. (1955), *The main elements of the Osiris legend with reference to Plutarch and certain folk-tales*, Durham theses, Durham University. Available at Durham E-Theses Online: <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/9519/> (accessed 2016/10).

BAINES John (1970), *bnbn: mythological and linguistic notes*, in Or 39, p. 389-404.

BAINES John (1990) *Myth, Gods, and the Early Written and Iconographic Record*, in JNES 50/2, p. 81-105.

- BAINES John (1996) *Myth and Literature*, in LOPRIENO Antonio (ed.), *Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms*, Leiden: Brill, p. 361-377.
- BALY Colin T. J. (1931), *A Note on the Origin of Osiris*, in JEA 17/3, p. 221-222.
- BARDINET Thierry (1995), *Les papyrus médicaux de l'Égypte pharaonique*, Paris: Fayard.
- BARGUET Paul (1967), *Le livre des morts des anciens Égyptiens*, Paris: Cerf.
- BARGUET Paul (1986), *Les textes des sarcophages égyptiens du Moyen Empire*, Paris: Cerf.
- BARTA Winfried (1980), *Kematef*, in LÄ III, cols. 382-383.
- BAUD Marcelle, DRIOTON Étienne (1928), *Tombes thébaines, Nécropole de Drâa Abû'n-Naga: Le tombeau de Roÿ, TT 255*, Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale.
- BEDIER Shafa (1995), *Die Rolle des Gottes Geb in den ägyptischen Tempelinschriften der griechisch-römischen Zeit*, Hildesheim: Gerstenberg.
- BEINLICH Horst (1983), *Osiris in Byblos?*, in WdO 14, p. 63-66.
- BEINLICH Horst (1991), *Das Buch vom Fayum: zum religioesen Eigenverstaendnis einer aegyptischen Landschaft*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- BICKEL Susanne (1998), *Die Jenseitsfahrt des Re nach Zeugen der Sargtexte*, in BRODBECK Andreas (ed.), *Ein ägyptisches Glasperlenspiel: ägyptologische Beiträge für Erik Hornung aus seinem Schülerkreis*, Berlin: Mann, p. 41-56.
- BLACKMAN Aylward M. (1932), *Middle-Egyptian Stories*, Bruxelles: Édition de la Fondation égyptologique Reine Élisabeth.
- BLACKMAN Aylward M., FAIRMAN Herbert. W. (1942), *The Myth of Horus at Edfu – II. C. The triumph of Horus over his enemies: A sacred drama*, in JEA 28, p. 32-36.
- BLACKMAN Aylward M., FAIRMAN Herbert. W. (1943), *The Myth of Horus at Edfu – II. C. The triumph of Horus over his enemies: A sacred drama (continued)*, in JEA 29, p. 2-38.
- BLACKMAN Aylward M., FAIRMAN Herbert. W. (1944), *The Myth of Horus at Edfu – II. C. The triumph of Horus over his enemies: A sacred drama (concluded)*, in JEA 30, p. 5-22.
- BOESER Pieter A. A. (1913), *Beschreibung der Aegyptischen Sammlung des Niederländischen Reichsmuseums der Altertümer in Leiden*, Vol. V, Haag: Nijhoff.
- BOLSHAKOV Andrey O. (1997), *Man and his double in Egyptian ideology of the Old Kingdom*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

BONNET Hans (1952), *Reallexikon der ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte*, Berlin: W. de Gruyter.

BORCHARDT Ludwig (1913), *Das Grabdenkmal des Königs S'ahu-Re*, Vol. 2, *Die Wandbilder: Abbildungsblätter*, Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung.

BORCHARDT Ludwig (1930), *Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire, N°1-1294, Statuen und Statuetten von Königen und Privatleuten im Museum von Kairo*, Vol. III, Berlin: Reichsdruckerei.

BORCHARDT Ludwig (1934), *Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire, N°1-1294, Statuen und Statuetten von Königen und Privatleuten im Museum von Kairo*, Vol. IV, Berlin: Reichsdruckerei.

BORGHOUTS Joris F. (1971), *The magical texts of papyrus Leiden I, 348*, Leiden: Brill.

BORGHOUTS Joris F. (1973), *The Evil Eye of Apopis*, in JEA 59, p. 114-150.

BORGHOUTS Joris F. (1978), *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts*, Leiden: Brill.

BORGHOUTS Joris F. (2007), *Book of the Dead [39]: From Shouting to Structure*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

BOTTI Giuseppe (1968), *Il Libro del Respirare e un Suo Nuovo Esemplare nel Papiro Demotico N. 766 del Museo Egizio di Torino*, in JEA 54, p. 223-230.

BOYLAN Patrick (1922), *Thoth the Hermes of Egypt. A Study of Some Aspects of Theological Thought in Ancient Egypt*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

BREASTED James H. (1906), *Ancient Records of Egypt, Volume 1: The First through the Seventeenth Dynasties*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

BREASTED James H. (1912), *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, New York: Charles Scribner's sons.

BRESCIANI Edda (1969), *Letteratura e poesia dell'Antico Egitto*, Torino: Einaudi.

BRITISH MUSEUM (1913), *Hieroglyphic texts from Egyptian stelae, etc., Part IV*, London : Trustees of the British Museum.

BRUNNER Helmuth (1975), *Osiris in Byblos*, in RdE 27, p. 37-40.

BUCHER Paul (1928), *Les hymnes à Sobek-Ra, seigneur de Smenou, des papyrus n° 2 et 7 de la Bibliothèque Nationale de Strasbourg*, in Kêmi 1, pp. 41-52, 147-66.

BUDGE Ernest A. W. (1899), *The Book of the Dead: Facsimiles of the Papyri of Hunefer, Anhai, Kerāsher and Netchemet; with Supplementary Text from the Papyrus of Nu with Transcripts, Translation, etc.*, London.

BUDGE Ernest A. W. (1904), *The Gods of the Egyptians or Studies in Egyptian Mythology*, Vol I, London: Methuen & Co.

BUDGE Ernest A. W. (1909), *A Guide to the Egyptian Galleries (Sculpture)*, London: Printed by order of the Trustees.

BUDGE Ernest A. W. (1910), *The Chapters of Coming forth by Day or the Theban Recension of the Book of the Dead. The Egyptian hieroglyphic text edited from numerous papyri*, I, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co.

BUDGE Ernest A. W. (1911), *Osiris and the Egyptian Resurrection*, Vol I, London: L. P. Warner.

BUDGE Ernest A. W. (1912), *Legends of the Gods. The Egyptian Texts, Edited with Translations*, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co.

BUDGE Ernest A. W. (1913), *The Papyrus of Ani a Reproduction in Facsimile Edited, with Hieroglyphic Transcript, Translation, and Introduction*, Vol. I, New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, London: Philip Lee Warner.

BUDGE Ernest A. W. (1913b), *The Papyrus of Ani a Reproduction in Facsimile Edited, with Hieroglyphic Transcript, Translation, and Introduction*, Vol. II, New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, London: Philip Lee Warner.

BUDGE Ernest A. W. (1914), *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptian*, London: J. M. Dent & Sons limited.

BURKARD Günter (1986), *Grabung im Asasif 1963-1970*, Vol III, *Die Papyrusfunde*, Mainz am Rhein: von Zabern.

BURKARD Günter (1995), *Spätzeitliche Osiris-Liturgien im Corpus der Asasif-Papyri: Übersetzung, Kommentar, formale und inhaltliche Analyse*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

CAUVILLE Sylvie (1997), *Le temple de Dendara: les chapelles osiriennes*, 3 vols., Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale.

CENTRONE Maria C. (2009), *Egyptian corn-mummies: a class of religious artefacts catalogued and systematically analysed*, Saarbrücken: VDM, Verlag Dr. Müller.

ČERNÝ Jaroslav (1939), *Late Ramesside Letters*, Bruxelles: Édition de la Fondation égyptologique Reine Élisabeth.

ČERNÝ Jaroslav (1942), *Le caractère des Oushebtis d'après les idées du Nouvel Empire*, in BIFAO 42, p. 105-133.

ČERNÝ Jaroslav, GARDINER Alan H. (1957), *Hieratic Ostraca*, Oxford: Griffith Institute.

CHABAS François (1868), *Horus sur les crocodiles*, in ZÄS 6, p. 99-106.

- CHASSINAT Émile (1892), *Le temple d'Edfou*, Vol. I, Paris: Leroux.
- CHASSINAT Émile (1894), *Le livre de protéger la bark divine*, in RT 16, p.105-122.
- CHASSINAT Émile (1897), *Le temple d'Edfou*, Vol. II, Paris: Leroux.
- CHASSINAT Émile (1930), *Le temple d'Edfou*, Vol. V, Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale.
- CHASSINAT Émile (1931), *Le temple d'Edfou*, Vol. VI, Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale.
- CHASSINAT Émile (1932), *Le temple d'Edfou*, Vol. VII, Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale.
- CHASSINAT Émile (1960), *Le temple d'Edfou*, X, Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale.
- CHASSINAT Émile (1966-1968), *Le mystère d'Osiris au mois de Khoiak*, 2 vols., Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale.
- CLÈRE Jacques J., VANDIER Jacques (1948), *Textes de la première période intermédiaire et de la XI^{ème} dynastie*, Bruxelles: Édition de la Fondation égyptologique Reine Élisabeth.
- CLÈRE Pierre (1961), *La porte d'Évergète à Karnak*, Le Caire: Imprimerie de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale.
- CORTEGGIANI Jean-Pierre (1995), *La "butte de la Décollation" à Héliopolis*, in BIFAO 95, p. 141-151.
- COULON Laurent (2008), *Le tombeau d'Osiris à travers les textes magiques du Nouvel Empire*, in GALLOIS Chr., GRANDET Pierre, PANTALACCI Laure (eds.), *Mélanges offerts à François Neveu*, p. 73-82.
- COULON Laurent (2013), *Osiris chez Hérodote*, in COULON Laurent, GIOVANNELLI-JOUANNA Pascale, KIMMEL-CLAUZET (eds.), *Hérodote et l'Égypte. Regards croisés sur le Livre II de l'Enquête d'Hérodote. Actes de la journée d'étude organisée à la Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée, Lyon, le 10 mai 2010*, Lyon: Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée, p. 167-190.
- CRUZ-URIBE Eugene (1994), *The Khonsu Cosmogony*, in JARCE 31, p. 169-189.
- CRUZ-URIBE Eugene (2009), *Sṯḫ ʿ3 pḥty "Seth, God of Power and Might"*, in JARCE 45, p. 201-226.
- DARESSY Georges (1901), *Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire N° 25001-25385 Ostraca*, Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale.

- DARESSY Georges (1903), *Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire N° 9401-9449. Textes et dessins magique*, Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale.
- DARESSY Georges (1917), *Stèle de Karnak avec textes magiques*, in ASAE 17, p. 194-196.
- DARESSY Georges (1919), *Statue de Zedher le sauveur*, ASAE 18, p. 113-158.
- DARNELL John C. (2004), *The enigmatic netherworld books of the solar-osirian unity: cryptographic compositions in the tombs of Tutankhamun, Ramesses VI and Ramesses IX*, Fribourg: Academic press, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- DAUMAS François (1988), *Valeurs phonétiques des signes hiéroglyphiques d'époque gréco-romaine*, Vol. I, Montpellier: Université de Montpellier.
- DAVIES Norman de Garis (1908), *The rock tombs of El Amarna, Part VI, Tombs of Parennefer, Tutu, and Aj*, London: Egypt Exploration Fund.
- DAVIES Norman de Garis (1953), *The Temple of Hibis in El Khāargeh oasis. Part III, the decoration*, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- DAVIES Norman de Garis, GARDINER Alan H (1915), *The Tomb of Amenemhet*, London: Egypt Exploration Fund.
- DE BUCK Adrian (1935), *The Egyptian Coffin Texts 1: Texts of Spells 1-75*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- DE BUCK Adrian (1938), *The Egyptian Coffin Texts 2: Texts of Spells 76-163*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- DE BUCK Adrian (1947), *The Egyptian Coffin Texts 3: Texts of Spells 164-267*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- DE BUCK Adrian (1951), *The Egyptian Coffin Texts 4: Texts of Spells 268-354*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- DE BUCK Adrian (1954), *The Egyptian Coffin Texts 5: Texts of Spells 355-471*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- DE BUCK Adrian (1956), *The Egyptian Coffin Texts 6: Texts of Spells 472-787*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- DE BUCK Adrian (1961), *The Egyptian Coffin Texts 7: Texts of Spells 787-1185*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- DE WIT Constant (1958), *Les inscriptions du temple d'Opet, à Karnak*, Vol. I, Bruxelles: Édition de la Fondation égyptologique Reine Élisabeth.

DERCHAIN Philippe (1965), *Le papyrus Salt 825 (B.M. 10051): rituel pour la conservation de la vie en Égypte*, Bruxelles: Palais des Académies.

DEVÉRIA Théodule (1896), *Mémoires et fragments*, Paris: Leroux.

DIODORUS SICULUS (1933), *Library of History, Volume I: Books 1-2.34*, Translated by OLDFATHER C. H., Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

DORMAN Peter *et al.* (2002), *The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Vol. 1, Egypt and the Ancient Near East*, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

DOXEY Denise M. (2001), *Names*, in REDFORD Donald B. (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, Vol II, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 490-492.

DRIOTON Étienne (1928-29), *Une scène des mystères d'Horus*, in REA 2, p. 172-199.

DRIOTON Étienne (1939), *Une statue prophylactique de Ramses III*, in ASAE 39, p. 57-89.

EATON Katherine J. (2006), *The Festivals of Osiris and Sokar in the Month of Khoiak: The Evidence from Nineteenth Dynasty Royal Monuments at Abydos*, in SAK 35, p. 75-101.

EBERST Gerorg (1875), *Papyros Ebers. Das Hermetische Buch über die Arzneimittel der alten Ägypter in hieratischer Schrift*, Vol. I, Leipzig: Engelmann.

EDWARDS Iorwerth E. S. (1939), *Hieroglyphic texts from Egyptian stelae etc.*, Part VIII, London: Printed by order of the Trustees of the British Museum.

EGBERTS Arno (1995), *In quest of meaning: a study of the ancient Egyptian rites of consecrating the meret-chests and driving the calves*, Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten.

EMERIT Sibylle (2012), *À propos de l'origine des interdits musicaux dans l'Égypte ancienne*, in BIFAO 102, p. 189-210.

ERMAN Adolf (1900), *Gebete eines ungerecht Verfolgten und andere Ostraka aus den Königsgräbern*, in ZÄS 38, p. 19-41.

ERMAN Adolf (1907), *A Handbook of Egyptian Religion*, London: Archibald Constable & Co.

ERMAN Adolf (1911a), *Die mit dem Zeichen {Gardiner O 35} geschriebenen Worte*, in ZÄS 48, p. 31-47.

EYRE Christopher (2002), *The Cannibal Hymn: A Cultural and Literary Study*, Bath: Liverpool University Press.

FÁBIÁN Zoltán I. (1989), *Heart Chapters in the Context of the Book of the Dead*, in SAK Bh 3, p. 249-259.

- FABRE David (2001), *De Seth à Typhon et vice versa*, in *Égypte, Afrique & Orient* 22, p. 41-55.
- FAIRMAN Herbert. W. (1935), *The Myth of Horus at Edfu – I*, in *JEA*, 21/1, p. 26-36.
- FAIRMAN Herbert. W. (1954-1955), *Worship and Festivals in an Egyptian Temple*, in *BRL* 37, p. 165-203.
- FAIRMAN Herbert. W. (1958), *The Kingship Rituals of Egypt*, in HOOKE S. H. (ed.) *Myth, ritual and kingship: essays on the theory and practice of kingship in the ancient Near East and in Israel*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 74-104.
- FARINA Giulio (1923), *Il mito di Osiri nei testi delle piramidi*, in *Bilychnis* 12, p. 202-212.
- FAULKNER Raymond O. (1924), *The “Cannibal Hymn” from the Pyramid Texts*, in *JEA* 10/2, p. 97-103.
- FAULKNER Raymond O. (1925), *The God Setekh in the Pyramid Texts*, *Ancient Egypt*, Part I, p. 5-10.
- FAULKNER Raymond O. (1933), *The papyrus Bremner-Rhind (British Museum no. 10188)*, Bruxelles: Édition de la Fondation égyptologique Reine Élisabeth.
- FAULKNER Raymond O. (1936), *The Bremner-Rhind Papyrus: I. A. The Songs of Isis and Nephthys*, in *JEA* 23/2, p. 121-140.
- FAULKNER Raymond O. (1937), *The Bremner-Rhind Papyrus: III: D. The Book of Overthrowing Apep*, in *JEA* 23/2, p. 166-185.
- FAULKNER Raymond O. (1938), *The Bremner-Rhind Papyrus: IV: D. The Book of Overthrowing Apep (concluded)*, in *JEA* 24/1, p. 41-53.
- FAULKNER Raymond O. (1954), *An Ancient Egyptian “Book of Hours”*, in *JEA* 40, p. 34-39.
- FAULKNER Raymond O. (1969), *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- FAULKNER Raymond O. (1969b), *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts, Vol. II, Supplement of hieroglyphic texts*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- FAULKNER Raymond O. (1973), *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts I: Spells 1–354*, Warminster: Aris & Phillips.
- FAULKNER Raymond O. (1977), *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts II: Spells 355–787*, Warminster: Aris & Phillips.
- FAULKNER Raymond O. (1978) *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts III: Spells 788–1185*, Warminster: Aris & Phillips.

FAULKNER Raymond O. (1985), *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, London: British Museum Press.

FEDER Frank (2008), *Nephthys - Die Gefährtin im Unrecht Die spät(zeitlich)e Enthüllung einer göttlichen Sünde*, in SAK 37, p. 69-83.

FELBER Heinz (2002), *Die Demotische Chronik*, in SCHIPPER Bernd U., BLASIUS Andreas (eds.), *Apokalyptik und Ägypten: eine kritische Analyse der relevanten Texte aus dem griechisch-römischen Ägypten*, Leuven: Peeters, p. 65-112.

FERMAT André (2010), *Le rituel de la maison de vie: Papyrus Salt 825*, Paris: MdV.

FIRCHOV Otto (1957), *Thebanische Tempelinschriften aus griechisch-römischer Zeit*, Vol. I, *Urkunden des ägyptischen Altertums*, Vol. VIII, Berlin: Akademie Verlag.

FISCHER Henry G. (1964), *Inscriptions from the Coptite Nome. Dynasties VI-XI*, Rome: Pontificium institutum biblicum.

FOSTER John L. (1978), *Some observation on Pyramid Texts 273-274, the so-called "Cannibal Hymn"*, in JSSEA 9, p. 51-63.

FOSTER John L. (1995), *Hymns, Prayers, and Songs. An Anthology of Ancient Egyptian Lyric Poetry*, Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press.

FOUCART Georges (1924), *Chapitre III: Les précurseurs du Soleil*, in BIFAO 24, p. 131-209.

FRANKE Detlef (2003), *Middle Kingdom Hymns and other sundry religious Texts – An Inventory*, in MEYER Sibylle (ed.), *Egypt – Temple of the Whole World. Ägypten – Tempel der gesamten Welt. Studies in Honour of Jan Assmann*, Leiden, Boston: Brill, p. 95-135.

FRANKE Detlef (2010), *"When the sun goes down..." – Early solar hymns on a pyramidion stela from the reign of Sekhemra-shedtowy Sobekemsaf*, in MARÉE Marcel (ed.), *The second intermediate period, thirteenth-seventeenth dynasties: current research, future prospects*, Leuven: Peeters, p. 283-302.

FRANKFORT Henri (1948), *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion of Society and Nature*, Chicago: the University of Chicago Press.

FRANKFORT Henri (1958), *The Dying God*, in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 21/3, p. 141-151.

FRANKFURTER David (1998), *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

FRAZER James G. (1911³), *The Golden Bough*, Vol. IV, *The Dying God*, London: Macmillan.

- FRAZER James G. (1914³), *The Golden Bough*, Vol. VI, *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, Part II, London: Macmillan.
- FRIEDMAN Florence (2001), *Akh*, in REDFORD Donald B. (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, Vol. I, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 47-48.
- GABER Amr (2009), *The Central Hall in the Egyptian Temples of the Ptolemaic Period*, Durham theses, Durham University. Available at Durham E-Theses Online: <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/88/> (accessed 2016/10).
- GABOLDE Marc (1995), *L'inondation sous les pieds d'Amon*, in BIFAO 95, p. 235-258.
- GARDINER Alan H. (1932), *Late-Egyptian Stories*, Bruxelles: Édition de la foundation égyptologique reine Élisabeth.
- GARDINER Alan H. (1935), *Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum. Third Series: Chester Beatty Gift*, London: British Museum.
- GARDINER Alan H. (1938), *The House of Life*, in JEA 24/2, p. 157-179.
- GARDINER Alan H. (1939), *The Royal Canon of Turin*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- GARDINER Alan H. (1944), *Horus the Behdetite*, in JEA 30, p. 23-60.
- GARDINER Alan H. (1946), *Davies's Copy of the Great Speos Artemidos Inscription*, in JEA 32, p. 43-56.
- GARDINER Alan H. (1947), Review of *Études de Syntaxe Copte* by H. J. Polotsky, in JEA 33, p. 95-101.
- GARDINER Alan H. (1955), *The Ramesseum Papyri*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- GARDINER Alan H. (1957³), *Egyptian Grammar. Being an Introduction to the Study of Hieroglyphs*, Oxford: Griffith Institute.
- GARDINER Alan H. (1960), *Was Osiris an Ancient King Subsequently Deified?*, in JEA 46, p. 104.
- GASSE Annie (1984), *La litanie des douze noms de Rê-Horakhty*, in BIFAO 84, p. 189-227.
- GEE John (2010), *Execration Rituals in Various Temples*, in DOLIŃSKA Monika, BEINLICH Horst (eds.), 8. *Ägyptologische Tempeltagung: Interconnections between Temples*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, p. 67-80.
- GEISEN Christina (2012), *The Ramesseum Dramatic Papyrus: A New Edition, Translation, and Interpretation*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto. Available online at:

https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/65472/3/Geisen_Christina_201206_Ph.D._thesis.pdf (accessed 2016/10).

GOLÉNISCHEFF Wladimir (1877), *Die Metternichstele in der Originalgrösse zum ersten Mal herausgegeben*, Leipzig.

GOLÉNISCHEFF Wladimir (1927), *Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire, N^{os} 58001 – 58036. Papyrus hiératiques*, Le Caire: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale.

GOYON Georges (1936), *Les Travaux de Chou et Les Tribulations de Geb dans le Naos 2248 d'Ismailia*, Kêmi 6, p. 1-42.

GOYON Jean-Claude (1969), *Textes mythologiques I. Le livre de protéger la bark du dieu*, in Kêmi 19, p. 23-65.

GOYON Jean-Claude (1971), *Un parallèle tardif d'une formule des inscriptions de la statue prophylactique de Ramsès III au Musée du Caire (Papyrus Brooklyn 47.218.138, col. x+13, 9 à 15)*, in JEA 57, p. 154-159.

GOYON Jean-Claude (1975a), *Textes mythologiques II. Les révélations du mystère des Quatre Boules*, in BIFAO 75, p. 349-399.

GOYON Jean-Claude (1975b), *Apophisbuch*, in LÄ I, cols. 354-355.

GOYON Jean-Claude (1978), *Hededyt : Isis-scorpion et Isis au scorpion. En marge du Papyrus de Brooklyn 47.218.50 – III*, in BIFAO 78, p. 439-458.

GOYON Jean-Claude (1999), *Le papyrus d'Imouthès, fils de Psintaês, au Metropolitan Museum of Art de New-York (Papyrus MMA 35.9.21)*, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

GRAPOW Hermann (1911), *Bedrohungen der Götter durch den Verstorbenen*, in ZÄS 49, p. 48-54.

GRAPOW Hermann (1935), *Die Himmelsgöttin Nut als Mutterschwein*, in ZÄS 71, p. 45-74.

GRÈBAUT Eugène (1874), *Hymne à Ammon-Ra des papyrus égyptiens du musée de Boulaq*, Paris: A. Franck.

GRIESHAMMER Reinhard (1977), *Feuer*, in LÄ II, cols. 205-206.

GRIFFITH Francis L. (1890), *The Antiquities of Tell el Yahûdîyeh, and Miscellaneous Work in Lower Egypt During the Years 1887-1888*, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co.

GRIFFITHS John G. (1909), *Herodotus II. 90. Apotheosis by drowning*, in ZÄS 46, p. 132-134.

GRIFFITHS John G. (1958), *The Interpretation of the Horus-Myth of Edfu*, in JEA 44, p. 75-85.

GRIFFITHS John G. (1960), *The Conflict of Horus and Seth from Egyptian and Classical Sources: a Study in Ancient Mythology*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

GRIFFITHS John G. (1970), *Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press.

GRIFFITHS John G. (1980), *The Origins of Osiris and His Cult*, Leiden: Brill. (First published as 1966, *The origins of Osiris*, Berlin: Hessling).

GUILHOU Nadine (1989), *La vieillesse des dieux*, Montpellier: Université de Montpellier.

GUILHOU Nadine (1998), *Les deux motifs d'Osiris, d'après les textes des Pyramides*, in *Egypte. Afrique & Orient* 10, p. 19-26.

GUILHOU Nadine (1998), *Un nouveau fragment du Livre de la Vache céleste*, in BIFAO 98, p. 197-213.

GÜLDEN Svenja A. (2001), *Die hieratischen Texte des P. Berlin 3049*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

GUNN Battiscomb (1924), *Studies in Egyptian Syntax*, Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner.

GUTBUB Adolphe (1979), *La tortue animal cosmique et bénéfique à l'époque ptolémaïque et romaine*, in VERCOUTTER Jean (ed.), *Hommages à la mémoire de Serge Sauneron*, Vol. I, Le Caire: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, p. 391-435.

HAIKAL Fayza M. H. (1970), *Two hieratic funerary papyri of Nesmin*, Vol. I, Bruxelles: Fondation égyptologique Reine Élisabeth.

HANI Jean (1976), *La religion égyptienne dans la pensée de Plutarque*, Paris: Société d'Édition.

HART George (2005²), *The Routledge Dictionary of Egyptian Gods and Goddesses*, London and New York: Routledge.

HASSAN Sélim (1928), *Hymnes religieux du moyen empire*, Le Caire: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale.

HAYES William C. (1978) [1953], *The Scepter of Egypt: A Background for the Study of the Egyptian Antiquities in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, Vol. I, *From the Earliest Times to the End of the Middle Kingdom*, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

- HELCK Wolfgang (1956), *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie, Abteilung IV, Heft 18: Biographische Inschriften von Zeitgenossen Thutmosis' III und Amenophis' II*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag.
- HELCK Wolfgang (1957), *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie, Abteilung IV, Heft 20: Historische Inschriften Amenophis' III*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag.
- HERBIN François René (1984), *Une nouvelle page du Livre des Respirations*, in BIFAO 84, p. 249-302.
- HERBIN François René (1988), *Les premières pages du papyrus Salt 825*, in BIFAO 88, p. 95-112.
- HERBIN François René (1994), *Le livre de parcourir l'éternité*, Leuven: Peeters.
- HERBIN François René (2004), *Un texte de glorification*, in SAK 32, p. 171-204.
- HERBIN François René (2008), *Books of breathing and related texts*, London: British Museum Press.
- HERBIN François René (2008), *Le papyrus magico-funéraire Louvre E 5353*, in ENiM 6, p. 257-289.
- HERMANN Siegfried (1958), *Isis in Byblos*, in ZÄS 82, p. 48-55.
- HOFFMANN Nadette (1996), *Reading the Amduat*, in ZÄS 123, p. 26-40.
- HOLLIS Susan T. (1998), *Otiose Deities and the Ancient Egyptian Pantheon*, in JARCE 35, p. 61-72.
- HÖLSCHER Uvo (1939), *The Excavation of Medinet Habu, Vol. 2, The Temples of the Eighteenth Dynasty*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- HOPFNER Theodor (1914), *Der Tierkult der alten Ägypter nach den griechisch-römischen Berichten und den wichtigeren Denkmälern*, Wien: in Kommission bei Alfred Hölder.
- HORNUNG Erik (1956), *Chaotische Bereiche in der geordneten Welt*, in ZÄS 87, p. 28-32.
- HORNUNG Erik (1963a), *Das Amduat Die Schrift des verborgenen Raumes, I*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- HORNUNG Erik (1963b), *Das Amduat Die Schrift des verborgenen Raumes, II*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- HORNUNG Erik (1974), *Seth. Geschichte und Bedeutung eines ägyptischen Gottes*, in *Symbolon Jahrbuch für Symbolforschung, Neue Folge* 2, p. 49-63.

- HORNUNG Erik (1979), *Das Buch von den Pforten des Jenseits nach den Versionen des Neuen Reiches*, Vol. I, Genève: Edition de Belles-Lettres.
- HORNUNG Erik (1980), *Das Buch von den Pforten des Jenseits nach den Versionen des Neuen Reiches*, Vol. II, Genève: Edition de Belles-Lettres.
- HORNUNG Erik (1982), *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and the Many*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. (Original German Edition, 1971, *Der Eine und die Vielen*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft).
- HORNUNG Erik (1982b), *Der ägyptische Mythos von der Himmelskuh: eine Ätiologie des Unvollkommenen*, Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- HORNUNG Erik (1999), *The Ancient Egyptian Books of the Afterlife*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press. (Original German Edition, 1997, *Altägyptische Jenseitsbücher*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft).
- HORNUNG Erik, BADAWEY Alexander (1975), *Apophis (Gott)*, in LÄ I, cols. 350-352.
- JACQUET-GORDON Helen (1965-1966), *Two Stelae of Horus-on-the-Crocodiles*, in *The Brooklyn Museum Annual* 7, p. 53-64.
- JANÁK Jiří (2010), *Spotting the Akh. The Presence of the Northern Bald Ibis in Ancient Egypt and its Early Decline*, in JARCE 46, p. 17-31.
- JANSEN-WINKELN Karl (1996), *“Horizont” und “Verklärtheit”: Zur Bedeutung der Wurzel 3ḥ*, in SAK 23, p. 201-215.
- JELINKOVÁ Eve A. E. (1962), *The Shebtiw in the temple at Edfu*, in ZÄS 87, p. 41-54.
- JELÍNKOVÁ-REYMOND Eve (1956), *Les inscriptions de la statue guérissante de Djed-Her-le-Sauveur*, Le Caire: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale.
- JENSEN Adolf E. (1951), *Mythos und Kult bei Naturvölkern: religionswissenschaftliche Betrachtungen*, Wiesbaden: F. Steiner.
- JØRGENSEN Jens B. (2014), *Egyptian Mythological Manuals: Mythological structures and interpretative techniques in the Tebtunis Mythological manual, the Manual of the Delta and related texts*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Copenhagen. Available online at: http://curis.ku.dk/ws/files/107265977/Ph.d._2014_J_rgensen.pdf (accessed 2016/10).
- JUNKER Hermann (1910), *Die Stundenwachen in den Osirismysterien nach den Inschriften von Dendera, Edfu und Philae*, Wien: Akademie der Wissenschaften.
- JUNKER Hermann (1942), *Der sehende und blinde Gott (Mhntj-irtj und Mhntj-n-irtj)*, München: Akademie der Wissenschaften.

KAHL Jochem (2007), *“Ra is My Lord”: Searching for the Rise of the Sun God at the Dawn of Egyptian History*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

KÁKOSY László (1969), *Probleme der ägyptischen Jenseitsvorstellungen in der Ptolemäer- und Kaiserzeit*, in DERCHAIN Philippe (ed.), *Religions en Egypte hellénistique et romaine. Colloque de Strasbourg, 16-18 mai 1967*, Paris: Presses Universitaire de France, p. 59-68.

KEES Hermann (1943), *Farbensymbolik in ägyptischen religiösen Texten*, in NAWG 11, p. 413-479.

KEES Hermann (1977) [1926], *Totenglauben und Jenseitsvorstellungen der alten Ägypter: Grundlagen und Entwicklung bis zum Ende des Mittleren Reiches*, Berlin: Akademie der Wissenschaften.

KITCHEN Kenneth A. (1975), *Ramesside Inscriptions Translated and Annotated*, Vol. I, Oxford: Blackwell.

KITCHEN Kenneth A. (1979), *Ramesside Inscriptions: Historical and Biographical*, Vol. II, Oxford: Blackwell.

KITCHEN Kenneth A. (1996), *Ramesside Inscriptions Translated and Annotated*, Vol. II, *Ramesse II, Royal Inscriptions*, Oxford: Blackwell.

KLASENS Adolf (1952), *A Magical Statue Base (Socle Behague) in the Museum of Antiquities at Leiden*, Leiden: Brill.

KLOTZ David (2012), *Caesar in the city of Amun: Egyptian temple construction and theology in Roman Thebes*, Turnhout: Brepols.

KOLEVA-IVANOV Elka (2005), *Les relations entre Horus et le venin (mtw.t) dans le textes magiques*, JES 2, p. 59-74.

KÖNIGLICHE MUSEEN ZU BERLIN (ed.) (1913), *Aegyptische Inschriften aus den Königlichen Museen zu Berlin*, Vol. I, *Inschriften von der ältesten Zeit bis zum Ende der Hyksoszeit*, Berlin: J.C. Hinrichs'sche.

KOUSOULIS Panagiotis (2003), *The function of heka as a mobilized form In a theological environment: the apotropaic ritual of overthrowing Apophis*, in HAWASS Zahi (ed.), *Egyptology at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century: Proceedings of the Eighth International Congress of Egyptologists, Cairo 2000*, Vol. 2, Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, p. 362-371.

KREMENSKA Silvia (2015), *The Egyptian god Seth in his role as a fighter and protector of the solar bark*, in JES 4, p. 126-140.

KUCHAREK Andrea (2010), *Die Klagelieder von Isis und Nephthys in Texten der Griechisch-Römischen Zeit*, Heidelberg: Winter.

KUENTZ Charles (1925), *La "Stèle du Mariage" de Ramsès II*, in ASAE 25, p. 181-238.

KURTH Dieter (1994), Die Reise der Hathor von Dendera nach Edfu, in GUNDLACH Rolf, ROCHHOLZ Matthias (eds.), *Ägyptische Tempel-Struktur, Funktion und Programm : Akten der Ägyptologischen Tempeltagungen in Gosen 1990 und in Mainz 1992*, Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, p. 211-216.

KURTH Dieter (ed.) (2004), *Edfou VII. Die Inschriften des Tempels von Edfu. Abteilung I Übersetzungen*, Vol. II, Wiessbaden: Harrassowitz.

KURTH Dieter (ed.) (2014), *Edfou VI. Die Inschriften des Tempels von Edfu. Abteilung I Übersetzungen*, Vol. III, Gladbeck: Pewe-Verlag.

LACAU Pierre (1908), *Textes religieux*, in RT 30, p. 185-202.

LACAU Pierre (1921), *Les statues "guérisseuses" dans l'ancienne Égypte*, in *Monuments et mémoires* 25, p. 189-209.

LANGE Hans O. (1927), *Der Magische Papyrus Harris*, Kopenhagen: Andr. Fred. Host & Son.

LANGE Hans O., SCHÄFER Heinrich (1902a), *Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire, N^{os} 20001–20780. Grab- und Denksteine des Mittleren Reiches*, Vol. IV, Berlin: Reichsdruckerei.

LANGE Hans O., SCHÄFER Heinrich (1902b), *Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire, N^{os} 20001–20780. Grab- und Denksteine des Mittleren Reiches*, Vol. IV, Berlin: Reichsdruckerei.

LAVIER Marie-Christine (1989), *Les mystères d'Osiris à Abydos d'après les stèles du moyen empire et du nouvel empire*, in SAK Bh 3, p. 289-295.

LEAHY Anthony (1984), *Death by Fire in Ancient Egypt*, in JESHO 27, 2, p. 199-206.

LECLANT Jean (1975), *Anat*, in LÄ I, cols. 253-258.

LEFÉBURE Eugène (1874), *Les yeux d'Horus*, Paris: A. Frank.

LEFÉBURE Eugène (1883), *Un chapitre de la chronique solaire*, in ZÄS 21, p. 27-33.

LEFEBVRE Gustave (1923a), *Le Tombeau de Petosiris*, Vol. II, *Les textes*, Le Caire: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale.

LEFEBVRE Gustave (1923b), *Le Tombeau de Petosiris*, Vol. III, *Vocabulaire et planches*, Le Caire: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale.

LEFEBVRE Gustave (1924), *Le Tombeau de Petosiris*, Vol. I, *Description*, Le Caire: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale.

LEFEBVRE Gustave (1931), *La statue «guérisseuse» du Musée du Louvre*, in BIFAO 30, p. 89-96.

LEGRAIN Georges (1893), *Textes recueillis dans quelques collections particulières*, in RT 14, p. 54-66.

LEITZ Christian (1999), *Magical and medical papyri of the New Kingdom*, London: British Museum Press.

LEITZ Christian (2002-2003), *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen*, Leuven: Peeters.

LEPSIUS Richard K. (1842), *Das Todtenbuch der Ägypter nach dem hieroglyphischen Papyrus in Turin*, Leipzig: Wigand.

LESKO Leonard H. (1977), *The Ancient Egyptian Book of Two Ways*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press.

LEXA François (1925), *La magie dans l'Égypte antique de l'Ancien Empire jusqu'à l'époque copte*, I, Paris: Librairie orientaliste P. Geuthner.

LICHTHEIM Miriam (1973), *Ancient Egyptian Literature I: Old and Middle Kingdoms*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press.

LICHTHEIM Miriam (1976), *Ancient Egyptian Literature II: the New Kingdom*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press.

LICHTHEIM Miriam (1980), *Ancient Egyptian Literature III: the Late Period*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press.

LUSTMAN Jacqueline (1999), *Étude grammaticale du Papyrus Bremner-Rhind*, Paris: J. Lustman.

MARIETTE Auguste (1871), *Les papyrus égyptiens du Musée de Boulaq*, Vol. I, Paris: A. Franck.

MARIETTE Auguste (1873), *Dendérah: description générale du grand temple de cette ville*, IV, Paris: Franck.

MARIETTE Auguste (1880), *Catalogue général des monuments d'Abydos: découverts pendant les fouilles de cette ville*, Paris: Imprimerie Nationale.

MATHIEU Bernard (2011), *Seth polymorphe: le rival, le vaincu, l'auxiliaire*, in ENiM 4, p. 137-158.

MATHIEU Bernard (2016), *Du conflit archaïque au mythe osirien: pour une lecture socio-politique du mythe dans l'Égypte pharaonique*, in *Droit et cultures* 71, p. 85-117.

MAYSTRE Charles (1941), *Le livre de la Vache du Ciel dans les tombeaux de la Vallée des Rois*, in BIFAO 40, p. 53-115.

- MCCLAIN Brett J. (2011), *The Cosmogonical Inscriptions of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II and the Cultic Evolution of the Temple of Djoser-set*, in DORMAN Peter F., BRYAN Betsy M. (eds.), *Perspectives on Ptolemaic Thebes*, Chicago: The Oriental Institute, p. 69-96.
- MEEKS Dimitri (1989), *Un manuel de géographie religieuse du Delta*, in SAK Bh 3, p. 297-304.
- MEEKS Dimitri (2006), *Mythes et légendes du Delta d'après le papyrus Brooklin 47.218.54*, Le Caire: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale.
- MENDEL Daniela (2003), *Die kosmogonischen Inschriften in der Barkenkapelle des Chonstempels von Karnak*, Turnhout: Brepols.
- MERCER Samuel A. B. (1952a), *The Pyramid Texts in Translation and Commentary*, Vol. I, New York: Longmans, Green and Co.
- MERCER Samuel A. B. (1952b), *The Pyramid Texts in Translation and Commentary*, Vol. II, New York: Longmans, Green and Co.
- MERCER Samuel A. B. (1952c), *The Pyramid Texts in Translation and Commentary*, Vol. III, New York: Longmans, Green and Co.
- MERCER Samuel A. B. (1952d), *The Pyramid Texts in Translation and Commentary*, Vol. IV, New York: Longmans, Green and Co.
- METTINGER Tryggve N. D. (2001), *The Riddle of Resurrection. "Dying and Rising Gods" in the Ancient Near East*, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International.
- MEYER Eduard (1904), *Aegyptische Chronologie*, Berlin: Akademie der Wissenschaften.
- MIOSI Frank T. (1989-1990), *Some Aspects of Geb in the Pyramid Texts*, in BES 10, p. 101-107.
- MIOSI Frank T. (2002), *Some Aspects of Geb in the Coffin Texts*, in JSSEA 29, p. 100-107.
- MOLEN Rami van der (2001), *A hieroglyphic dictionary of Egyptian coffin texts*, Leiden: Brill.
- MÖLLER Georg (1913), *Die beiden Totenpapyrus Rhind des Museums zu Edinburg*, Vol. I, Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung.
- MÖLLER Georg (1965) [1927²], *Hieratische Paläographie*, Vol. II, Osnabrück: Otto Zeller.
- MORENZ Ludvig D. (2004), *Apophis: On the Origin, Name, and Nature of an Ancient Egyptian Anti-God*, in JNES 63, 3, p. 201-205.

- MORET Alexandre (1915), *Horus saveur*, in RHR 72, p. 213-287.
- MORET Alexandre (1927), *La mise à mort du dieu en Egypte*, Paris: Guethner.
- MORET Alexandre (1931), *La légende d'Osiris à l'époque thébaine d'après l'hymne à Osiris du Louvre*, in BIFAO 30, p. 725-750.
- MORSCHAUSER Scott (1991), *Threat-formulae in ancient Egypt: A study of the history, structure, and use of threats and curses in ancient Egypt*, Baltimore: Halgo.
- MÜLLER-ROTH Marcus (2008), *Das Buch vom Tage*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Fribourg: Academic press Fribourg.
- MYSLIWIEC Karol (1978-1979), *Studien zum Gott Atum*, 2 vols., Hildesheim: Gerstenberg.
- NAGEL Georges (1929a), *Set dans la bark solaire*, in BIFAO 28, p. 33-39.
- NAGEL Georges (1929b), *Un papyrus funéraire de la fin du Nouvel Empire [Louvre 3292 (inv.)]*, in BIFAO 29, p. 1-127.
- NAVILLE Édouard (1876), *La destruction des hommes par les dieux*, in TSBA 4, pp. 1 - 19.
- NAVILLE Édouard (1886), *Das Aegyptische Todtenbuch der XVIII. bis XX. Dynastie*, Berlin: A Asher & Co.
- NAVILLE Édouard (1896), *The temple of Deir el Bahari*, Vol. II, *The Ebony Shrine, Northern Half of the Middle Platform*, London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co.
- NAVILLE Édouard (1898), *The Temple of Deir el Bahari*, Vol. III, *End of northern half and southern half of the middle platform*, London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co.
- NAVILLE Édouard (1901), *The temple of Deir el Bahari*, Volume IV, *The shrine of Hathor and the southern hall of offerings*, London: Egypt Exploration Fund.
- NAVILLE Édouard (1908), *The Funeral Papyrus of Iouiya*, London: Archibald Constable.
- NEEDLER Winifred (1963), *An Egyptian Funerary Bed of the Roman Period in the Royal Ontario Museum*, Chicago: the University of Chicago Press.
- NELSON Harold H. (1942), *The Identity of Amon-Re of United-with-Eternity*, in JNES 1, p. 127-155.
- NICHOLSON Paul, SHAW Ian (2003), *The British Museum Dictionary of Ancient Egypt*, London: British Museum Press.
- NUNN John F. (1996), *Ancient Egyptian Medicine*, London: British Museum Press.

- O'CONNELL Robert H. (1983), *The Emergence of Horus: An Analysis of Coffin Text Spell 148*, in JEA 69, p. 66-87.
- OSING Jürgen, ROSATI Gloria (1998), *Papiri geroglifici e ieratici da Tebtynis*, Firenze: Giuntina.
- OTTO Eberhard (1962), *Zwei Paralleltexzte zu TB 175*, in CdE 37, p. 249-256.
- PARKER Richard A., LECLANT Jean, GOYON Jean-Claude (1979), *The edifice of Taharqa by the Sacred Lake of Karnak*, Providence: Brown university press; London: Lund Humphries.
- PARKER Richard A., LESKO Leonard H (1988), *The Khonsu Cosmogony*, in BAINES John (ed.), *Pyramid studies and other essays presented to I.E.S. Edwards*, London: Egypt Exploration Society, p. 168-175.
- PARKINSON Richard B. (1999), *Cracking Codes: The Rosetta Stone and Decipherment*, Berkley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press.
- PIANKOFF Alexandre (1933), *Le naos D 29 du Musée du Louvre*, in RdE 1, p. 161-179.
- PIANKOFF Alexandre (1934), *The Sky-Goddess Nut and the Night Journey of the Sun*, in JEA 20, p. 57-61.
- PIANKOFF Alexandre (1942), *Le livre du jour et de la nuit*, Le Caire: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale.
- PIANKOFF Alexandre, RAMBOVA Natasa (1957), *Mythological papyri*, New York: Pantheon Books.
- PINCH Geraldine (1994), *Magic in Ancient Egypt*, London: British Museum Press.
- PLEYTE Willem (1881), *Chapitres supplémentaires du Livre des Morts 162 à 174. Traduction et commentaire*, Leiden: Brill.
- PLEYTE Willem, ROSSI Francesco (1869-1876a), *Papyrus de Turin, I, Texte*, Leiden: Brill.
- PLEYTE Willem, ROSSI Francesco (1869-1876b), *Papyrus de Turin, II, Planche*, Leiden: Brill.
- PLUTARCH (1936), *Moralia, Volume V: Isis and Osiris. The E at Delphi. The Oracles at Delphi No Longer Given in Verse. The Obsolescence of Oracles*, Translated by BABBITT Frank C., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- POSENER Georges (1951), *Catalogue des ostraca hiératiques littéraires de Deir el Médineh*, Le Caire: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale.
- POSENER Georges (1960), *De la divinité du pharaon*, Paris: Imprimerie Nationale.

- POSTEL Lilian (2003), «Rame» ou «course»? *Enquête lexicographique sur le terme hpt*, in BIFAO 103, p. 377-420.
- QUACK Joachim F. (1996), Review of *Le livre de parcourir l'éternité* by François-René Herbin, in OLZ 91, p. 151-158.
- QUACK Joachim F. (2004), *Der pränatale Geschlechtsverkehr von Isis und Osiris sowie eine Notiz zum Alter des Osiris*, in SAK 32, p. 327-332.
- QUACK Joachim F. (2011), Review of *Éléments de théologie thébaine* by Annie Wüthrich, in WdO 41, p. 255-261.
- QUIRKE Stephen (1992), *Ancient Egyptian Religion*, London: British Museum Press.
- QUIRKE Stephen (2001), *The Cult of Ra: Sun-Worship in Ancient Egypt*, London: Thames & Hudson.
- QUIRKE Stephen (2013), *Going out in daylight "prt m hrw". The ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead: translation, sources, meanings*, London: Golden House Publications.
- RATIÉ Suzanne (1968), *Le papyrus de Neferoubenef (Louvre III 93)*, Le Caire: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale.
- RAVEN Maarten J. (1983), *Wax in Egyptian Magic and Symbolism*, OMRO 64, p. 7-47.
- RAY John D. (1986), *Psammuthis and Hakoris*, in JEA 86, p. 149-158.
- REYMOND Eve A. E (1963), *Worship of the Ancestor Gods at Edfu*, in CdE 38, p. 49-70.
- RITNER Robert K. (1993), *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, Chicago: The Oriental Institute.
- ROCCATI Alessandro (1980), *Aspetti di Dio nella civiltà Egizia*, in *Dio nella bibbia e nelle culture ad essa contemporanee e connesse*, Torino: Elle di Ci, p. 218-231.
- ROCCATI Alessandro (1984), *Les Papyrus de Turin*, BFSE 99, p. 9 - 27.
- ROCHE Aurélie (2014), *Et le roi tua l'hippopotame: Enquête sur les origines d'un rite égyptien*, in *Archimède* 1, p. 71-87.
- ROEDER Günther (1924), *Aegyptische Inschriften aus den Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin*, Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung.
- ROEDER Günther (1952), *Hermopolis, 1929-1939: Ausgrabungen der Deutschen Hermopolis-Expedition in Hermopolis, Ober-Ägypten, in Verbindung mit zahlreichen Mitarbeitern*, Hildesheim: Gerstenberg.

RÖßLER-KÖHLER Ursula (1979), *Kapitel 17 des ägyptischen Totenbuches: Untersuchungen zur Textgeschichte und Funktion eines Textes der altägyptischen Totenliteratur*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

RYHOLT Kim (2004), *The Turin King-list*, in AeUL 14, p. 135-155.

SANDER-HANSEN Constantin E. (1956), *Die Texte der Metternichstele*, Kopenhagen: Munksgaard.

SANDMAN Maj (1938), *Texts from the time of Akhenaten*, Bruxelles: Édition de la Fondation égyptologique Reine Élisabeth

SANDRI Sandra (2006), *Har-Pa-Chered (Harpokrates). Die Genese eines ägyptischen Götterkindes*, Leuven: Peeters.

SAUNERON Serge (1952), *Rituel de l'embaumement, pap. Boulaq III, pap. Louvre 5.158*, Le Caire: Imprimerie nationale.

SAUNERON Serge (1953), *L'hymne au soleil levant des papyrus de Berlin 3050, 3056 et 3048*, in BIFAO 53, p. 65-90.

SAUNERON Serge (1962), *Esna, Vol. V, Les fêtes religieuses d'Esna aux derniers siècles du paganisme*, Le Caire: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale.

SAUNERON Serge (1968), *Esna, Vol. III*, Le Caire: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale.

SAUNERON Serge (1983²), *Villes et légendes d'Égypte*, Le Caire: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale.

SAUNERON Serge (1989), *Un traité égyptien d'ophiologie: papyrus du Brooklyn Museum n° 47.218.48 et.85*, Le Caire: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale.

SAUNERON Serge, YOYOTTE Jean (1959), *La naissance du monde selon l'Égypte ancienne*, in VV.AA., *Sources orientales*, Vol. I, *La naissance du monde*, p. 17-92.

SCHÄFER Heinrich (1904), *Die Mysterien des Osiris in Abydos unter König Sesostri III, nach dem Denkstein des Oberschatzmeisters I-Cher-Nofret im Berliner Museum*, Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung.

SCHÄFER Heinrich (1932), *Djed-pfeiler, Lebenszeichen, Osiris, Isis*, in GLANVILLE S. R. K. (ed.), *Studies Presented to F. Ll. Griffith*, London: Egypt Exploration Society, p. 424-431.

SCHARFF Alexander (1922), *Aegyptische Sonnenlieder*, Berlin: Curtius.

SCHENKEL Wolfgang (1965), *Memphis, Herakleopolis, Theben: die epigraphischen Zeugnisse der 7. - 11. Dynastie Ägyptens*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

SCHNEIDER Thomas (1998), *Mythos und Zeitgeschichte in der 30. Dynastie: Eine politisehe Lektüre des Mythos von den Götterkönigen*, in BRODBECK Andreas (ed.), *Ein ägyptisches Glasperlenspiel. Ägyptologische Beiträge für Erik Hornung aus seinem Schülerkreis*, Berlin: Mann, p. 207-245.

SCHOTT Siegfried (1929), *Urkunden mythologischen Inhalts*, Vol. VI, Heft I, *Bücher und Sprüche gegen den Gott Seth*, Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung.

SCHOTT Siegfried (1968), *Falke, Geier und Ibis als Krönungsboten*, in ZÄS 95, p. 54-65.

SCOTT Nora E. (1951), *The Metternich Stela*, in BMMA, Vol 8, No. 9, p. 201-217.

SERVAJEAN Frédéric (2009), *Le cycle du ba dans le Rituel de l'Embaumement P. Boulaq III*, 8, 12-8, 16, in ENiM 2, p. 9-23.

SETHE Kurt (1906), *Urkunden der 18. Dynasie*, Vol I, Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung.

SETHE Kurt (1908), *Die Altaegyptischen Pyramidentexte Pyramidentexte nach den Papierabdrucken und Photographien des Berliner Museums*, Vol I, Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung.

SETHE Kurt (1910), *Die Altaegyptischen Pyramidentexte Pyramidentexte nach den Papierabdrucken und Photographien des Berliner Museums*, Vol II, Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung.

SETHE Kurt (1916), *Von Zahlen und Zahlworten bei den alten Ägyptern*, Strassburg: K. J. Trübner.

SETHE Kurt (1929), *Amun und die acht Urgötter von Hermopolis: eine Untersuchung über Ursprung und Wesen des ägyptischen Götterkönigs*, Berlin: Akademie der Wissenschaften.

SETHE Kurt (1932), *Urkunden des Alten Reichs*, Vol I, Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung.

SETHE Kurt (1936a), *Übersetzung und Kommentar zu den altägyptischen Pyramidentexten*, Vol. I, Hamburg: J. J. Augustin.

SETHE Kurt (1936b), *Übersetzung und Kommentar zu den altägyptischen Pyramidentexten*, Vol. II, Hamburg: J. J. Augustin.

SETHE Kurt (1959) [1928], *Ägyptische Lesestücke zum Gebrauch im akademischen Unterricht: Texte des mittleren Reiches*, Hildesheim: G. Olms.

SEYFRIED Karl J. (1990), *Das Grab des Amonmose (TT 373)*, Mainz am Rhein: von Zabern.

SHALOMI-HEN Racheli (2015), *The Dawn of Osiris and the Dusk of the Sun-Temples: Religious History at the End of the Fifth Dynasty*, in DER MANUELIAN Peter, SCHNEIDER Thomas (eds.), *Towards a New History for the Egyptian Old Kingdom: Perspectives on the Pyramid Age*, Leiden: Brill, p. 456-469.

SHAW Ian (2000), *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, New York: Oxford University Press.

SHMAKOV Timofey T. (2012), *Critical Analysis of J. P. Allen's "The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts"*, Omsk-Tricht. Available online at: http://www.egyptologyforum.org/bbs/Shmakov_Critical_analysis_PTs_vs1.pdf (accessed 2016/10).

SHONKWILER Randy L. (2014), *The Behdetite: A Study of Horus the Behdetite from the Old Kingdom to the Conquest of Alexander*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago. Available online at: <https://oi.uchicago.edu/sites/oi.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/shared/docs/SHONKWILER DISSERTATION.pdf> (accessed 2016/10).

SMITH Mark (2009), *Traversing eternity: texts for the afterlife from Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

SMITH Mark (2014), *Osiris and the Deceased in Ancient Egypt: Perspectives from Four Millennia*, in ASR 121, p. 87-101.

SOUKIASSIAN Georges (1981), *Une étape de la proscription de Seth*, in GM 44, p. 59-68.

SPALINGER Anthony J. (2000), *The Destruction of Mankind: A Transitional Literary Text*, in SAK 28, p. 257-282.

SPALINGER Anthony J. (2009), *The Great Dedicatory Inscription of Ramesses II: A Solar-Osirian Tractate at Abydos*, Leiden: Brill.

SPIEGELBERG Wilhelm (1914), *Die sogenannte Demotische Chronik des Pap. 215 der Bibliothèque Nationale zu Paris nebst den auf der Rückseite des Papyrus stehenden Texten*, Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung.

STERNBERG–EL-HOTABI Heike (1987), *Die Götterdarstellungen der Metternichstele. Ein Neuansatz zu ihrer Interpretation als Elemente eines Kontinuitätsmodells*, in GM 97, p. 25-70.

STERNBERG–EL-HOTABI Heike (1994), *Ein vorläufiger Katalog der sogenannten Horusstelen*, in GM 142, p. 27-54.

STERNBERG–EL-HOTABI Heike (1999), *Untersuchungen zur Überlieferungsgeschichte der Horusstelen. Ein Beitrag zur Religionsgeschichte Ägyptens im 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.*, Wiesbaden : Harrassowitz.

- STEWART Harry M. (1957), *A Possibly Contemporary Parallel to the Inscription of Suty and Hor*, in JEA 43, p. 3-5.
- STEWART Harry M. (1960), *Some Pre-Amarnah Sun-Hymns*, in JEA, 46, p. 83-90.
- SZCZUDŁOWSKA Albertyna (1972), *Liturgical Text Preserved on Sekowski Papyrus*, in ZÄS 98 p. 50-80.
- TAYLOR John H. (2001), *Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt*, Chicago: the University of Chicago Press.
- TE VELDE Herman (1967), *Seth, God of Confusion: A Study of His Role in Egyptian Mythology and Religion*, Leiden: Brill.
- TE VELDE Herman (1969–1970), *The God Heka in Egyptian Theology*, in JEOL 21, p. 175-186.
- TE VELDE Herman (1977), *Geb*, in LÄ II, cols. 427-429.
- TE VELDE Herman (1984), *Schu*, in LÄ V, cols. 735-737.
- TE VELDE Herman (1985-1986), *Egyptian Hieroglyphs as Signs, Symbols and Metaphors*, in *Visible Religion. Annual for Religious Iconography*, 4-5, Leiden: Brill, p. 63–72.
- TEETER Emily (2011), *Religion and Ritual in Ancient Egypt*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- THE EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY (1980), *The Tomb of Kheruef: Theban Tomb 192*, Chicago: The Oriental Institute.
- THOMAS Elizabeth (1956), *Solar Barks Prow to Prow*, in JEA 42, p. 65-79.
- TOBIN Vincent Arie (1993), *Divine Conflict in the Pyramid Texts*, in JARCE 30, p. 93-110.
- TORO RUEDA María Isabel (2003), *Das Herz in der ägyptischen Literatur des zweiten Jahrtausends v. Chr: Untersuchungen zu Idiomatik und Metaphorik von Ausdrücken mit jb und ḥ3tj*, Ph.D. dissertation, Georg-August-Universität, Göttingen. Available online at: <https://ediss.uni-goettingen.de/handle/11858/00-1735-0000-000D-F260-3> (accessed 2016/10).
- TRAUNECKER Claude (1981), *La chapelle d'Achôris à Karnak*, Vol. II, Paris: ADPF.
- TRESSON Paul (1922), *La stèle de Koubân*, Le Caire: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale.
- TURNER Philip J. (2013), *Seth – A Misrepresented God in the Ancient Egyptian Pantheon?*, Oxford: Archeopress.

- VAN DE WALLE Baudouin (1953), *La tortue dans la religion et la magie égyptiennes*, in *La nouvelle Clio* 5, p. 173-189.
- VAN DIJK Jacobus (1979–1980), *The Birth of Horus According to the Ebers Papyrus*, in *JEOL* 26, p. 10-25.
- VAN DIJK Jacobus (1989), *An Early Hymn to Osiris as Nocturnal Manifestation of Ra*, in MARTIN Geoffrey T. (ed.), *The Memphite Tomb of Horemheb, Commander-in-chief of Tutankhamun*, Vol. I, *The Reliefs, Inscriptions, and Commentary*, London: Egypt Exploration Society, p. 61-69.
- VANDIER Jacques (1962), *Le papyrus Jumilhac*, Paris: Centre national de la recherche scientifique.
- VARILLE Alexandre (1942), *L'hymne au soleil des architectes d'Aménophis III Souti et Hor*, in *BIFAO* 41, p. 25-30.
- VERHOEVEN Ursula (1991), *Eine Vergewaltigung ? Vom Umgang mit einer Textstelle des Naos von El Arish (Tefnut-Studien I)*, in VERHOEVEN Ursula, GRAEFE Erhart (eds.), *Religion und Philosophie im Alten Ägypten: Festgabe für Philippe Derchain zu seinem 65. Geburtstag am 24. July 1991*, Leuven: Peeters, p. 319-330.
- VERHOEVEN Ursula (2001), *Untersuchungen zur späthieratischen Buchschrift*, Leuven: Peeters.
- VERNUS Pascal (1980), *Études de philologie et de linguistique*, in *RdE* 32, p. 117-134.
- VERNUS Pascal (1991), *Le mythe d'un mythe; la prétendue noyade d'Osiris*, in *SEAP* 9, p. 19-32.
- VOLOKHINE Youri (2002), *Le dieu Thot au Qasr el-Agoûz : *Dd-ḥr-p3-hb*, *Dḥwty-stm**, in *BIFAO* 102, p. 405-423.
- VON BERGMANN Ernst (1879), *Hieroglyphische Inschriften gesammelt während einer im Winter 1877/78 unternommenen Reise in Ägypten*, Wien: Faesy & Frick.
- VON BOMHARD Anne-Sophie (2014), *Le début du Livre de Nout*, *ENiM* 7, p. 79-123.
- VON LIEVEN Alexandra (2000), *Der Himmel über Esna: Eine Fallstudie zur Religiösen Astronomie in Ägypten am Beispiel der kosmologischen Decken- und Architravinschriften im Tempel von Esna*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- VON LIEVEN Alexandra (2006), *Seth ist im Recht, Osiris ist im Unrecht! Sethkultorte und ihre Version des Osiris-Mythos*, in *ZÄS* 133, p. 141-150.
- VON LIEVEN Alexandra (2007), *Grundriss des Laufes der Sterne: das sogenannte Nutbuch*, Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press.

VON LIEVEN Alexandra (2015), *Antisocial Gods? On the Transgression of Norms in Ancient Egyptian Mythology*, in NYORD Rune, RYHOLT Kim (eds.), *Lotus and Laurel: Studies on Egyptian Language and Religion in Honour of Paul John Frandsen*, Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, p. 181-207.

VON STRAUSS UND TORNEY Victor (1889), *Der altägyptische Götterglaube*, Vol. I, *Die Götter und Göttersagen*, Heidelberg: Winter.

WADDELL William G. (1964) *Manetho*, London and Cambridge: William Heinemann Ltd. and Harvard University Press.

WAINWRIGHT Gerald A. (1932), *Iron in Egypt*, in JEA 18, 1, p. 3-15.

WALKER James H. (1996), *Studies in Ancient Egyptian Anatomical Terminology*, Warminster: Aris & Phillips.

WENTE Edward F. (1967), *Late Ramesside Letters*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

WENTE Edward F. (1990), *Letters from Ancient Egypt*, Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press.

WENTE Edward F. (2003a) *The Book of the Heavenly Cow* in SIMPSON William K. (ed.), *The literature of ancient Egypt: An anthology of stories, instructions, stelae, autobiographies, and poetry*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, p. 289-298.

WENTE Edward F. (2003b) *The Contendings of Horus and Seth* in SIMPSON William K. (ed.), *The literature of ancient Egypt: An anthology of stories, instructions, stelae, autobiographies, and poetry*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, p. 91-103.

WESTENDORF Wolfhart (1966), *Beiträge aus und zu den medizinischen Texten*, in ZÄS 92, p. 128-154.

WESTENDORF Wolfhart (1975), *Dunaii*, in LÄ I, cols. 1152-1153.

WIEDEMANN Alfred (1897), *Religion of the Ancient Egyptians*, London: H. Grevel & Co. (Original German Edition, 1890, *Die Religion der alten Ägypter*, Münster: Aschendorff).

WILLEMS Harco (2014), *Ramses II helps the dead: An interpretation of the Book of the dead supplementary chapter 166*, in JEA 100, p. 395-420.

WILLIAMS Ronald J. (1962), *Reflections on the Lebensmüde*, in JEA 48, p. 49-56.

WILSON John H. (1969a), *Egyptian Myths, Tales, and Mortuary Texts*, in PRITCHARD James B. (ed.) *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 3-36.

- WILSON John H. (1969b), *Egyptian Rituals and Incantations*, in PRITCHARD James B. (ed.) *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 325-330.
- WILSON Penelope (1991a), *A Lexicographical Study of the Ptolemaic Texts in the Temple of Edfu*, Vol. II, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Liverpool.
- WILSON Penelope (1991b), *A Lexicographical Study of the Ptolemaic Texts in the Temple of Edfu*, Vol. III, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Liverpool.
- WILSON Penelope (1997), *Slaughtering the crocodile at Edfu and Dendera*, in QUIRKE Stephen (ed.), *The temple in Ancient Egypt: new discoveries and recent research*, London: British Museum Press, p. 179-203.
- WINLOCK Herbert. E. (1924), *A Statue of Horemhab before His Accession*, in JEA 10/1, p. 1-5.
- WÜTHRICH Annie (2010), *Éléments de théologie thébaine: les chapitres supplémentaires du Livre des Morts*, Wiessbaden: Harrassowitz.
- XELLA Paolo (ed.) *Quando un Dio muore. Morti e assenze divine nelle antiche tradizioni mediterranee*, Verona: Essedue.
- ZABKAR Louis V. (1968), *A Study of the Ba Concept in Ancient Egyptian Texts*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- ZABKAR Louis V. (1975), *Ba*, in LÄ I, cols. 588-590.
- ZANDEE Jan (1959-62), *Prayers to the Sun-god from Theban Tombs*, in JEOL 16, p. 48-71.
- ZANDEE Jan (1960), *Death as an Enemy: According to Ancient Egyptian Conceptions*, Leiden: Brill.
- ZANDEE Jan (1963), *Seth als Sturmgott*, in ZÄS 90, p. 144-156.
- ZANDEE Jan (1969), *The Book of Gates*, in BLEEKER Claas J. (ed.), *Liber Amicorum: Studies in Honor of Professor Dr. C.J. Bleeker*, Leiden: Brill, p. 282-324.
- ZIVIE-COCHE Christiane (2003), *L'Egitto faraonico*, in DUNAND Françoise, *Dei e uomini nell'Egitto antico (3000 a.C. - 395 d.C.)*, p. 29-217. (Original French edition, 1991, *Dieux et hommes en Égypte 3000 av. J.-C. - 395 apr. J.-C.*), Paris: Colin).
- ZIVIE-COCHE Christiane (2005-2006), *Religion de l'Égypte ancienne. Conférences de Mme Christiane Zivie-Coche*, in ASR 114, p. 127-137.
- ZIVIE-COCHE Christiane (2006-2007), *Religion de l'Égypte ancienne. Conférences de Mme Christiane Zivie-Coche*, in ASR 115, p. 73-83.

ZIVIE-COCHE Christiane (2009), *L'Ogdoad à Thèbes à l'époque ptolémaïque et ses antécédents*, in THIERS Christophe (ed.), *Documents de Théologies Thébaines Tardives (D3T 1)*, CENiM 3, p. 167-225.

ZIVIE-COCHE Christiane (2013), *L'Ogdoad à Thèbes à l'époque ptolémaïque (II). Le périptère du petit temple de Médinet Habou*, in THIERS Christophe (ed.), *Documents de Théologies Thébaines Tardives (D3T 2)*, CENiM 8, p. 227-284.

ZIVIE-COCHE Christiane (2015), *L'Ogdoad à Thèbes à l'époque ptolémaïque (III). Le pylône du petit temple de Médinet Habou*, in THIERS Christophe (ed.), *Documents de Théologies Thébaines Tardives (D3T 3)*, CENiM 13, p. 327-397.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor prof. Marilina Betrò for the useful comments and remarks through the learning process of this master thesis, and above all for proposing me this fascinating subject. Furthermore, I would like to thank my co-advisor dr. Gianluca Miniaci.

I also express my warm thanks to all library staff, all of them kind, patient, and always willing to help us students with a smile.

I am using this opportunity to express my gratitude to everyone who supported me throughout the course of my University years and above all to my university friends, who always listened to me and supported me. I am grateful to my MA friends Marina Sartori for her contagious enthusiasm and constant encouragement, and Marianna Zarli for helping me putting pieces together more than once and for her priceless advice. I also owe many thanks to my special BA friends Federica Dell'Amore, Veronica Preti, and Chiara Trentini who have been sustaining me for a long time. I cannot express my gratitude and appreciation for your friendship.

Many tanks go to my old friend Chiara Bortolameolli, now a promising linguist, who gave up much of her free time to read through my English, correcting some mistakes, and help me to considerably improve the fluency of this paper. I am grateful for your valuable help.

I would like to show my gratitude to my relatives Duccio Cordiviola and his wife Giuliana for their warm hospitality when I firstly moved to start University. You have always treated me like your own granddaughter rather than like a great-niece. I am also grateful to their entire family and to Giuliano Lodola in particular. I would also like to thank Serena Vecchio who made me feel at home, even if I was far away from mine, since I first arrived in town.

Most importantly, none of this could have happened without my family to which I will always be obliged. Words cannot express how grateful I am to my mother and father for all of the sacrifices that they have made on my behalf. You mean the world to me and I owe everything to you. I am also really grateful to my grandmother Rosita who transmitted me love for learning and who has always been motivating me. My mind also races to my grandmother Lilliana, who I wish were here to be proud of me.

This dissertation stands indeed as a testament to all my family's unconditional love and encouragement.